LVIV BOOK FORUM CONVERSATIONS

With the support of Hay Festival

HAY FESTIVAL

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Lviv BookForum 2022
Conversations

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‘The Language of War’

by Oleksandr Mykhed

Opening talk of the 29th Lviv BookForum

On Thursday, 24 February 2022, Ukraine wakes up to explosions, phone calls and messages: ‘It has begun.’

My wife Olena and I have been living in the town of Hostomel for four years. My parents have been living in their new dwelling for less than a year not far from us, in Bucha.

Russian helicopters and fighter jets have been flying overhead since early morning. Air smells of gunpowder and smoke from the shelling of Hostomel airport.

In the evening of February 24, Olena and I managed to evacuate from Hostomel to my mother’s hometown – Chernivtsi.

Those driving that night on the almost completely paralyzed roads of our native country, remember exactly how bloody the full moon of that night looked. Never before and, I hope, never again will I see such a moon, leaning bloodthirstily towards the ground with its blood-splattered face.

Words fail me. I can’t find the right arguments to convince my parents to leave Bucha.

They will spend three weeks under Russian occupation.

On the fifth day of the invasion, I go to sleep in a frozen gym next to a hundred men who, of their own free will, obeyed the call of their hearts and joined the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. I have never held a weapon or served before; now I have only one desire – to learn and be useful to my country. Because under the fire of Russian missiles, all my previous experiences seem useless and unnecessary.

A week after the invasion, a Russian shell will fall on our house and bury my past there with Olena. But what is even more terrifying is that dozens of our incredible neighbours will remain under shellfire within our residential complex in Hostomel throughout the occupation, and they will fight every day for their own lives and lives of those nearby.

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What is life like during the full-scale invasion?

Death walks close by. Daily reports of co-workers killed. Friends of friends. Acquaintances. The servicemen, whose interviews we watched the day before. Photographers. Journalists. Civilians. Peaceful citizens.

As singer Sasha Koltsova would later say: 'In Ukraine, we know every deceased person via a couple of handshakes, so every death hurts.'

In the photographs of the dead from Bucha, Olena recognizes the body of an eccentric old man who used to carry an axe, and whom we would see daily on morning walks in our forest.

The map of the morning reports of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is a map of internal anxieties and worries about friends who serve in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Looking at these movements at the frontline, I see the faces of those who are there.

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War is a tally of tragedies that cannot be forgotten, and it is a martyrology of destroyed cities and cultural monuments.

What is the book industry like during the full-scale invasion?

Writers, translators, publishers are perishing.

Publishing warehouses are being destroyed.

Libraries are in flames. Russians are burning Ukrainian books and 'purging' libraries of 'enemy' literature.

Publishing houses stop working. Some of the niche publishing houses founded by veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation that have been operating since 2014 are closed because their entire staff has gone to war.

Sales are plunging. Bookstores are only just reopening now after several months of closure. Prices for paper and printing materials are rising.

Hundreds of books ready to go into print this year will not see the light of day. A generation of authors will not make their mark in the world of literature.

Thousands of internally displaced people may never again be engaged in literature, translation, art, because they need to survive. Or perhaps they will rediscover the value of their creative work in this blood-drenched crimson fog of war.

During the first month of the invasion I wrote letters of refusal asking to be excluded from all cultural projects in which I have been previously involved. I can't think in terms of project timelines when my planning scope is fifteen seconds long – that's the period of time it takes the air raid alert map of my country to be updated.

The deadline for the project you're offering me is in the next few months. Are you being serious? I am an individual with no past, a doubtful present and, I am certain, a happy but very distant future.

And if earlier I was convinced that a work of art must have certain timeless patterns that will allow it to pass the test of time, now there is an even higher requirement – to pass the test of genocide.

How many books will turn out to be unworthy of reprinting, how many films and exhibitions will depreciate and look naive or anachronistic. How many war movies will we not be able to watch. And how many classic works of Ukrainian literature will become familiar and understandable to us.

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The key concept that I have been thinking about since the first day of the invasion is the language of war. What are we doing to our language? What can our language do to us?

The language of war is direct, like an order that cannot have a double interpretation that needs no clarification. We speak more clearly, more simply, in chopped phrases, saving each other's time and saturating conversation with information. Without tears. Without rhetorical questions.

A military confirmation of the information received is increasingly penetrating civilian conversations – we say 'plus', an analogue of the English 'roger that'.

A week before the start of the full-scale invasion, billboards appeared across the country with the signs '4.5.0' – an expression that is army slang for 'all is well'. It is this combination of numbers that should be radioed every half an hour while on duty, and every twenty minutes at night-time.

The language of war is the flow of speech in which trauma speaks. Trauma cannot be silent.

The war engenders a return to the simplest means of communication.

Parents write with marker pens on the backs of small children – names, addresses, phone numbers.

For if they get lost. Parents or children.

For if they get killed. Parents or children.

Doctors on the battlefield, in the absence of a marker, recommend writing the time the tourniquet was applied to the affected limb directly on the forehead of a wounded comrade, with his own blood.

This war is about homemade grave crosses and attempts to record at least some details.

Like a handwritten letter from Mariupol seen on the news: 'Please, tell him: Dima, mother died on March 9, 2022. She died quickly. Then the house burned down. Dima, I'm sorry I couldn't save her. I buried mother near the kindergarten.' Next is a plan with directions to the grave. And below: 'I love you.'

Often the crosses have a simple inscription 'Unknown'.

If a person was shot in a car and nothing was known about them, then the car registration number is nailed to the cross.

Huge pieces of paper are hung around Mariupol, covered with inscriptions – relatives looking for relatives. People looking for people.

'Your son is alive!!! He is at his godfather's!!!'

'Mom, I'm at home. Your house didn't burn down! I'm waiting. If I leave, Aunt Nina has the keys. Your daughter.'

'Yura, come home. Mom is very worried. Dad'.

At the end of April information is being spread about the village of Yagidne near Chernihiv, liberated from the occupiers.

360 villagers spent twenty-five days in the unheated basement of the school without electricity.

The floor area is 76 square meters.

The oldest woman in the cellar is ninety-three years old.

The youngest child is three months old.

The strongest men, there were about thirty of them, slept standing up. Every night they tied themselves with scarves to the wooden-panelled wall to take up less space and make room for the sick and weak.

The Russians did not allow the bodies of the dead to be buried. For some time they were still among the living.

On the entrance door of the basement, which the occupiers kept closed, people scrawled a calendar, and on the walls on both sides of the door two columns of dates and surnames were scratched with charcoal.

Right column – ten names of those who died due to living conditions in the basement.

Left column – seven names of those killed by the Russians.

The last entry on the calendar on the basement walls reads 'Our own have come.'

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The language of war is the words of goodbyes.

A message arrives from a friend of mine who has joined the Armed Forces.

He is going on a mission from which not everyone will return alive. He asks me to pass his words of love to his wife and children, and tell them that if something happens to him, then these actions of his have not been a mistake. He is aware of the danger he faces, but all this is not in vain. All this makes sense.

He loves music. Communicates with music. He sends a link to the track to the sound of which he will go into battle.

As I write these lines, this track is playing on the loop. 'Thunderstruck' by AC/DC.

I will be listening to it until I hear from him again.

'Alive'. Or at least '+', '++'.

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Month eight of the invasion draws to a close. It wasn't until a few weeks ago that I was able to start reading again. It's like learning to walk anew.

During the full-scale Russian invasion, I find it hard to believe in artistic fiction. I don't believe in the possibility of escaping into a fictional world when the only reality of your only life is ablaze.

Art, of course, can provide consolation.

However, these days art has a daily purpose – to be a chronicler. To ruthlessly record every criminal step, every act of the Russian occupiers.

Reality of nonfiction, a documentary in which there can be neither editing nor even colour correction.

We must survive in order to testify and not let Russia's crimes be forgotten.

The more of us they kill, the more of us will bear witness to their evil.

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Our position on total rejection of Russian content and Russian culture, including the classics, is considered too radical by other countries. Festival organizers strive to unite Ukrainian and Russian artists in the same panels, discussions, anthologies. Festival organizers do not understand that Russia for us is a cannibal, a terrorist and a rapist.

Russia is a war criminal; unable to wage war against the Armed Forces, it fights against civilians. They don't have a strategy. Instead, they have ammunition prohibited by international conventions and rockets flying to kill civilians.

Just this week, Russia has once again held meaningless referendums, declared mobilization, and thousands of Russians – who did not protest against the tens of thousands of murdered Ukrainians, the destroyed cities and the unprovoked war, so conveniently referred to as a 'special operation' – are now trying to avoid mobilization. And the world's interpretation of Russians who support the annexation of Crimea, who consider the so-called Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic to be Russian territories and have silently observed the formation of totalitarian racism for decades? They are now perceived as 'victims of war', 'forced migrants', 'victims of the regime' – this is equating victims with perpetrators. Levelling the tragedy of the Ukrainian people, caused by the actions of totalitarian Russia.

As I am writing these lines, Ukrainian refugees in a Finnish refuge centre asking for help because some Russian men who fled mobilization will now live with Ukrainian women and children in one centre. Apparently, authorities see no problem in asking them to live together. This is the reality of 're-traumatization' that we will have to endure for decades.

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At the bottom of our emergency backpack, Olena puts a practical guide on how to rebuild civilization after the apocalypse. How to set up water production at home, how to create electricity, find food.

Every day brings more and more talk about the possibility of Russian use of nuclear weapons.

It seems that we have passed the stage of acceptance; OK, so this horror may happen. We cannot prevent this menace of the manic empire on our own. We keep on living.

I keep asking my friends who are interested in this issue: what is a nuclear strike like? How big is it? Is it one city? Is it a district? Would it destroy a district of Kyiv such as Obolon or Troyeshchyna? Or a regional centre like Zhytomyr or Ternopil?

I read about the aftermath of Hiroshima. And no matter how much I have had to learn about human evil, every time I freeze in bewilderment. I can't get used to the idea that there is life after Auschwitz, after Nagasaki, after Hiroshima, after Bucha, Izyum and Mariupol.

No matter how this life might be.

I cannot believe that human mind can contain such evil.

Meanwhile, volunteers we know start buying special iodine tablets; they must be taken immediately after a nuclear strike.

If there is a lesson that I've learned during this invasion it sounds like this: no matter how pessimistic you are, Russia will do something even worse.

Well, if the backpack survives, then we have a piece of nonfiction with instructions for restoring life.

Somewhere out there, after nuclear winter, nuclear spring will come.

The more of us they kill, the more of us will bear witness to their evil. Because there is evil that should never be forgotten.

* * *

What is existing in the full-scale invasion like?

It's a daily forging of the path through hell. It is a loss of your most beloved ones. It's mourning for the dead, whom you never knew, but who feel like family. Because we are all one.

Being in the middle of the full-scale invasion means waiting for messages from relatives every day.

Like in those weeks, when day after day we were waiting for text messages from my parents in occupied Bucha. And finally, one short word appeared: 'Alive'.

And like now when I'm waiting for messages from my brothers-in-arms. Just one small symbol that means life.

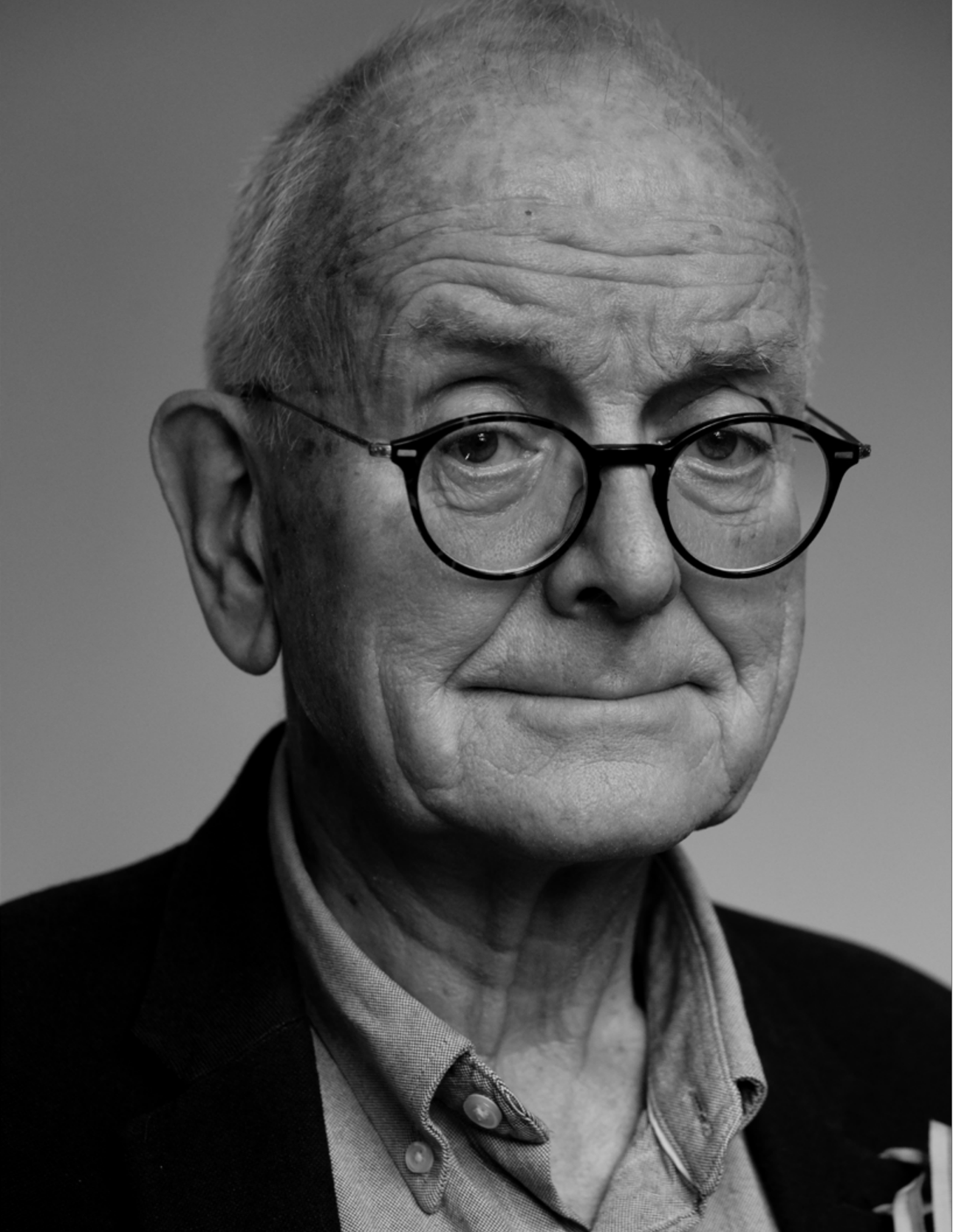
'+.

'++'.

The occupied territories will be free. Russia will be punished. And evil will not be forgotten.

Glory to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Glory to Ukraine.

Oleksandr Mykhed is a writer and curator. He is currently working on the non-fiction book The Language of War about the full-scale invasion and his own experience of it. His non-fiction book I Will Mix Your Blood with Coal, an exploration of the Donbas and the Ukrainian east, is forthcoming in English and Polish translations and is available in German, published by Ibidem. He is a member of PEN Ukraine.



Love and Loss

Participants: Andriy Myzak (Chair), Rachel Clarke, Henry Marsh, Yurko Prokhasko
Pre-recorded video message: Iryna Tsybukh

Andriy Myzak: Dear friends, we're happy to welcome you to this first panel of the forum. It is our honour to open this year's forum, which is obviously a very special one. I would like to start by introducing the participants.

Dr Rachel Clarke is a doctor. She specializes in palliative care and she is a campaigner for the UK's national health system (NHS). Rachel previously worked as a TV journalist reporting out of numerous war zones for leading TV channels in Britain, and has filmed a documentary on child soldiers in the First and Second Congo War.

Dr Henry Marsh is a British neurosurgeon, writer, carpenter and beekeeper.

Mr Yurko Prokhasko is a renowned Ukrainian Gemanist, essayist and psychoanalyst.

My name is Andriy Myzak. I am an ordinary Ukrainian neurosurgeon. It so happened that I translated Dr Marsh's first book and the first Ukrainian book by Dr Rachel Clarke, which has just come out. It's called *Dear Life* or *Liube moie zhyttia* and it's dedicated to the life that revolves around palliative medicine.

However, our meeting and our conversation will begin with a brief video. Mrs Iryna Tsybukh is a paramedic in the Hospitallers, and is on the front line. She has recorded a video greeting for us.

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Iryna Tsybukh ***[pre-recorded video]:*** Hello, dear friends. My name is Iryna Tsybukh and I am a paramedic in the Hospitallers volunteer medical battalion. I'm often addressed by my code name, CheKa, which is the ring on a grenade. When I think about the particularities of our work, it's very difficult to find something special in saving the lives of our fighters, because it's regular work ruled by protocol. What's different about our work is that we constantly work with consumable supplies and, as a result, we feel the constant need to help our crew, our battalion, to renew these consumables. Each fighter is as-

signed a certain number of items that we will never recover, that we use only on this fighter, that make up the instruments that may save his life and keep him healthy. And so, as a battalion, we need regular support and assistance.

As for the questions of why I decided to go to war, why I joined the best medical battalion in our country – that's difficult for me to answer, because it seems a very obvious decision to go save the people who are defending our land. And to join a team that practises its profession according to the highest global standards.

For my part, I will briefly tell you how we work. Right now we are carrying out combat tasks. One of the battalions of marines – these fighters do fantastic things. They put themselves forward to stop the advance of Russian troops, they put themselves forward for the sweeps, that is, for the liberation of Ukrainian territory.

Our crew's combat task is evacuation – medical evacuation, that is, saving people, extracting them from the battle field, stabilizing them and taking to a stabilization point or hospital. I hope that everyone in this war, including my crew and myself, understands and finds their role. The same goes for those of you watching this video – give your all and fulfil your role in this full-scale war. All of my gratitude to you for watching. I am sure that this is a part of the great victory. Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes! Undoubtedly, we will win.

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Andriy Myzak: About half an hour before the beginning of our conversation, Rachel said that, this being her first time in Eastern Europe, she went for a walk in the city centre this morning. She told me how wonderful and lively she found the city, until she reached the Garrison Church and saw a lot of guys in military uniform, and realized she'd come across a farewell ceremony – a funeral – for one of our soldiers who died in the east. And Rachel said: 'Now I know why I'm here. This is why I'm here.'

When I started translating her book, and it was more than two years ago, and I started talking to her about the possibility of coming to Ukraine. At first she couldn't come because there was a lot of work at the clinic. We should remember that she also has two small children. Then Covid broke out. All these reasons prevented her from coming to Ukraine. But today, when our country is at war, when it is fighting for its very existence, our friends have realized that they cannot but come to Ukraine and that they must come. Dr Marsh has been coming to Ukraine for more than thirty years, we all know him well. But he has discovered an entirely new country in his most recent visits.

So, my first question is for our English colleagues. How do they see our country now? What is your impression Dr Marsh, you who've come here so often, for so long? And what do you think Rachel about what you've seen and what you expect to see?

Henry Marsh: Firstly to say, I cannot tell you how happy I am to be back here again. Partly because there was a seven-hour queue at Krakovets yesterday. As Andriy said, I first came to Ukraine in 1992, one year after independence. And before some of you were born, I suppose. Just as Rachel had been a television documentary maker before she became a doctor, I had been, really, a Kremlinologist. I had studied Soviet politics at Oxford University and then, for various reasons, became a brain surgeon. And when I came here in 1992, almost by chance, I never really thought I would be able to combine Kremlinology with brain surgery. But in some ways I did. But the point is that I understood as soon as I arrived here that there was something very, very special about Ukraine.

And I would come back to England and say: 'Look, guys, Ukraine is a really important country.' And people in England and America would say: 'Ukraine? Where's that? Isn't it part of Russia or something like that?'

But I think I can claim I understood that it was, potentially, a young country trying to escape a quite terrible past. And although I never thought for a moment there would actually be a war – although I knew very well that Eastern Ukraine was more Russophile than Western Ukraine, which had never been part of Russia in the first place – it did seem to me when the war started it was really a terrible expression of the contrast I understood when I first came here.

And although the war is terrible and, as Andriy said, Rachel and I were looking at the funeral outside the Garrison Church this morning. War is terrible. Many people are losing their sons. The suffering is awful. And yet it is also – I still feel it somehow – the birth pangs of, potentially, a great future for Ukraine, because Ukraine is a young country. And the more often I come here, particularly in recent years, the changes are just fantastic, like coming to UCU, a brand [new] perfect modern Western European university. This, of course, is what is such a terrible threat to Putin and Russia.

Because the war, as you all know – and I think as most people understand in Western Europe and England – the war you are suffering through at the moment is really a war for the values of Western civilization. And it is a war we – all of us – cannot afford to lose. You certainly cannot afford to lose it because you are fighting for your land, for your lives. But why there has been so much support militarily and culturally – and this book forum today is part of that cultural support – is because there is a very wide understanding in the West that this is a war we cannot afford to lose.

And that is why I am very happy to be back here and my own very small contribution. I'm very happy to have been able to come with my friend Rachel, and hopefully we can do something – particularly Rachel can do something – to help our Ukrainian medical colleagues improve the medical care in this country, as I've been trying to do in a very modest way for the last thirty years.

Rachel Clarke: Hello, everyone, and thank you so much for inviting us. As soon as I heard about this event, I thought: 'Yes, this is the spirit of Ukraine', that I have only learned about from our newspapers, from all of the news coverage of the war in Britain. But what a spirit it already was from what we have read and followed through the last six months or so of your experience of war. I thought how absolutely wonderful that [while] Putin is doing his best to silence you, to silence and perhaps eradicate Ukrainian culture, here in Lviv, you are saying: 'Let's crack on with our book festival, shall we? Let's speak out. Let's get the whole world hearing our words.'

And to be able to come here and be a tiny part of that is just wonderful. So even though Henry and I did spend seven hours at the border and I know more about my colleagues in the car than perhaps I ever wanted to, I was so excited about coming here.

And in answer, Andriy, to your question, I would say that in a peculiar way, my first impressions of Ukraine remind me of the world I have just left yesterday, which is the world of what seems to be a very dark place. I work in a very big, busy hospital near Oxford in England and, because I work in palliative medicine, I see patients every day – day in, day out – who are dying, who are very close to death, who are very frightened, who are exquisitely anguished by the thought that they are losing everyone, everything, they love in the world.

That is my working world. That's my day job. And you might think that is a very depressing world to inhabit. That must be so gloomy. But it isn't. It's a wonderful world. It's an incredible world because in this world, all of the things that we tend to worry about, we fret about – our silly little problems, whether or not we've got wrinkles, our hair is going grey – all of that is irrelevant. None of it matters. The only thing that matters as someone approaches the end of their life is the really, really important stuff.

And of course, that boils down to love. It is the people you love. It is the things you love in the world. It is the gorgeous sunshine, the trees outside, the birdsong … and all of those things you can still live. You can still inhabit that world of love and joy and beauty, not just in the final weeks and days of your life, but the final seconds. My job as a palliative care doctor is to help people experience all of that.

So, I arrive in Ukraine last night. I'm given an incredibly strong vodka martini by people who are so welcoming and warm and delighted to meet us. And then this morning, I'm walking through this beautiful city. The sky could not be more perfect, crystal blue, and seeing kids in a little crocodile line going off to school. And we sit in a cafe and we have cognac. We sound like alcoholics, but maybe that's Ukraine for us at the moment.

And all I have seen since I have arrived here is simple, beautiful, ordinary, everyday life. And when I say ordinary, I mean absolutely ordinary. And yet simultaneously extraordinary, because that surely is what all of us in this world are fighting for, the right to live our beautiful, joyous, ordinary lives. I know that is the fight that you are all going through now. You are fighting for that existence. So it is gorgeous for me to see all of this unfolding in its ordinary, everyday glory here in Lviv.

Andriy Myzak: Thank you, Rachel. I have a question for you. Henry always said that he became a neurosurgeon because he was enchanted with the beauty of neurosurgery, with the subtle, delicate movements; the perfection of execution. These are completely understandable motives for everyone, and you have just described how important palliative care is to people and how important it is to give – to share love until the very end. But the question is for you – as a medical student, you wouldn't have known how beautiful palliative care could be. How did you decide that after graduating from medical school you would choose the specialty of helping people in the terminal stages of their lives? What was your motivation?

Rachel Clarke: Well, it's a good question because there is no glory or excitement in palliative medicine. Sometimes I say that a neurosurgeon like Henry, neurosurgeons are the rock stars of the medical profession. They are the people who, when they meet others, they are received with words like: 'Wow, that's incredible. Tell me more.' Yeah. Neurosurgeon. It's like being a fighter pilot or an astronaut.

Henry Marsh: Her husband's a fighter pilot.

Rachel Clarke: Yes. When I say I'm a palliative care doctor, people say: 'Oh. OK, that must be depressing.' So I'm not a rock star. I'm a very bad support act. Henry is Mick Jagger. But I realized very, very early on in medical school that, although every patient is vulnerable, if you are a patient, you are in a state of fear, perhaps pain, you go into hospital, you don't have your clothes, you have a gown, suddenly you are so vulnerable; even though all patients are vulnerable, some patients are particularly vulnerable. So, for example, people with disabilities or who are very elderly or who may have mental health problems and patients at the end of life, palliative care patients are one such particularly vulnerable group. They are often forgotten in a busy hospital. They are so weak, they are so tired. They can't say, 'Help me.' They are overlooked.

And even in medical school training, you're not taught about death and dying. You're taught how to save lives. Young doctors are very unconfident about looking after patients at the end of life. All of these reasons mean dying can be so much worse than it needs to be. The care is so much worse than it needs to be. And I saw this and I thought: That's where I want to be, because I want to be doing the best I can for the most vulnerable patients. These patients need a voice. They need someone in the hospital to stand up and fight for them.

And actually, in society, in British society, death is a taboo. People get very nervous, anxious about death. They don't like talking about it. And palliative care should be properly funded by our government. Our National Health Service is meant to be cradle to grave, so the beginning to the end of life. But palliative care mainly is not provided by the National Health Service. It comes from charities, people donating, and that's wrong. So partly, I wanted to fight on behalf of these very vulnerable patients. And also, it is an absolute remarkable daily privilege to be welcomed into patients' lives at the end. I see the very, very best of human beings, of human nature. Every day at work I see more strength,

Andriy Myzak

courage, compassion, generosity – all of the things that are good about human beings – I see in remarkable abundance every day at work.

And it is just a privilege to see that. You know, sometimes if I feel angry about the state of the world, I'm so grateful for the fact that I can go to work and meet people who only care about the things that matter in life with such astonishing, quiet dignity and courage. And it is a privilege.

Andriy Myzak: Thank you, Rachel. I thought that maybe the best feature of civilization is the will to find the weakest in your community and give your help and love to them. So that's probably what distinguishes us people from others. Yurko, over to you?

Yurko Prokhasko: Thank you. I'm also very grateful for the invitation. I'll probably invoke the statement about the rock star among surgeons and say that once psychoanalysts – it's probably different now, maybe it has changed, maybe this view is already outdated and antique. But let's say, yes, there were such times, and they lasted for quite a long time, when psychoanalysts were regarded as stars. Maybe not rock stars, but maybe they were, so to speak, conductors among psychotherapists. I would also like to say that this is far from the most important thing in this profession. The psychoanalysis we practice in war time probably is not even psychoanalysis. It's about something bigger, it's about the fact that psychotherapy – including psychotherapy with many, many people who have suffered emotional wounds, who have been traumatized, who still want to love – psychotherapy is something that opens up incredible horizons.

Psychotherapy, first of all, is necessary; it is a great adventure – both an intellectual and spiritual one. And the question is who benefits the most: the one who resorts to therapy, or the one who conducts therapy? It is not clear for whom psychotherapy is more beneficial – the patient or the therapist. First of all, it is about experiencing solidarity, which comes through understanding. It is about the fact that in the psychotherapeutic environment what is illness and what is health is completely unimportant. Despite the fact that the concepts of illness and health still exist, they lose their primary meaning. That is, this distinction loses its primary meaning.

It is about the fact that we get the experience that we are all people and everything human that can only be in us, from the greatest to the lowest, is always with us and there can be one side on top, then the other one, sometimes in combination, then in their totality.

It's about understanding – not making a diagnosis. About being well aware of suffering and understanding that suffering – especially when that suffering is caused by such massive loss and tragedy as we face now – is neither a disease phenomenon nor something that must be diagnosed, and on the basis of that diagnosis some kind of hierarchy must be built: who is better, who is worse, who is more affected, who is less affected, who is more inclined to live together, who is not, who is more inclined to building up a community, and who, perhaps, must already be excluded.

And just as in palliative medicine, psychotherapy also has those two features. This is not about success, because some people need, will need, psychotherapy for the rest of their lives without any obvious successes or visible triumphs, without what we call 'recovery' that we can take credit for. But it is also about a second feature, and that second feature is dignity. And if we now build our new understanding of ourselves, especially now, in the context of this war, it has become absolutely obvious to me that we experience a long-lasting revolution of dignity, and this war is also an integral part of it. And if we treat human dignity with such respect, then for me psychotherapy today, psychotherapy always, but nowadays especially, is also the ability to offer those who suffer greatly now and who may always be suffering, those whom we cannot heal from suffering, the possibility to feel a sense of belonging to a community of dignity.

Andriy Myzak: Thank you, Mr Yurko. I do not think that the majority of Ukrainians, the Ukrainian community, are psychoanalysts, but we have been analysing ourselves continuously since 24 February. If we look back at ourselves and remember what we were in those early days and what we are now, these are completely different people, completely different communities, and we will never be what we were before. And I sometimes envy our British friends who live on their safe island, and they have certainly earned it, for one century. And we are now the only nation in Europe that has actual experience of war, that is fighting for its very existence. We are facing very difficult times. We should not think that everything is over. We are already trained.

And there will be great losses. The topic of our conversation, and one of the main topics that Rachel brings up in her book, is the topic of loss of one's patients and one's family, because in the penultimate chapter of her book, Rachel describes how she lost her father, who was also a doctor. There is nothing more

painful, but these are personal losses, individual losses. We are currently exposed to mass losses in Ukraine, as we said recently – we all know each other here through two or three handshakes. That is, many of us have lost friends, relatives, if not friends, then friends of friends, and I would like to ask our English friends: how should we, if one takes an external view, how can our nation now cope with these great mass losses of ours?

This is my question for Rachel and Henry, and one more comment from me. When I was translating Rachel's book, it was difficult in one aspect. Even though I'm a neurosurgeon and I'm used to dealing with death and mutilation, I sometimes put off the work of translating because it was painful. It hurt me to translate, to pass this text through myself. But after half a day or the next day, I came back to this painful text again, it was a magnet to me. That is, I want to say that I realized then that there is no more important topic. So my question is, I'll reiterate it again, we're talking about love and loss. But here in Ukraine, we are now losing many more of those people we love.

Rachel Clarke: That is a huge question. And in a sense, I feel – as someone who is privileged enough to come from that very safe island – who am I to suggest any answer to you who are here enduring this daily? However, I will try my best.

There is no underestimating the pain of losing the people we love, whether that is as individuals or collectively as a country. There is nothing more piercing, more painful than losing the people you love. And we cannot pretend otherwise. That is the cost of being human, of being a mortal creature. We know from the moment we are conscious that one day we will die and we have to live with that knowledge still loving.

The only way to protect ourselves from that pain, that seemingly unendurable pain, the only way to protect ourselves is not to love anyone. We can build walls. We can protect ourselves, barricade ourselves away and say, I won't love anybody, because if I do, I will be opening my heart to the most unendurable loss. But of course, that is no way to live. Nobody can be happy living like that. The more you open your heart and make it vulnerable and make it – one day, in the future – inevitably filled with pain, that's the only way to live life.

My observation as somebody who works with death and dying and people who are devastated by loss every day is this – and it may be relevant for you in Ukraine – the one thing that helps, the only thing, perhaps, immediately that

helps is other people. It is the tiny acts of kindness, of care from other people. It doesn't even have to be from someone else you love. It can be from a stranger.

For example, during the pandemic, the Covid pandemic, when I cared for hundreds of people who died from Covid; one day, I cared for a young woman who was dying from Covid. She had two little girls this high, very young, who came to visit mummy in hospital, and they put on their party dresses to look nice for mummy. But I had to cover the party dresses with PPE, with gloves, with masks, with a gown. So the two little girls went along the hospital corridor with their party dresses hidden by plastic, by PPE, and they saw mummy. And afterwards, I went into my patient's room. And she was very distressed, of course, she was dying. She had said goodbye, tried to say goodbye, to her daughters and her husband. And we gave her lots of medicine, lots of drugs. Nothing helped. And in the end, a nurse that I worked with, went very close to this young woman, even though she had Covid and we were not meant to. We were meant to try and not touch anybody unless we had to.

She took my patient and I took my patient in our arms and we held her and we wrapped our arms around her – I'm sorry, it's making me emotional – but we just held her like a mother would hold a child who's crying and distressed. And she was screaming. She was so distraught because she was losing her children. And when the nurse – it was her idea, it was not my idea – when the nurse held her and we took her in our arms, the screaming stopped and she calmed and she held us and she gripped our arms. And she died soon afterwards. The pain was helped not by drugs, but by two strangers holding her and trying to communicate through our embrace that she mattered. We loved her. We were with her. We knew how hard this was.

Now, none of that, none of that takes away the pain that you all as a country are enduring every day. The losses, the anguish. But it is in each other's arms that we find solace. And it's not small. It's huge. That is everything. That is what we can give each other as human beings. And so that is all we can find from each other to help us through. But it is also enormous. It is everything. So I would say it is in the relationships; the tiny attempts to reach out to each other with care and love and compassion and say: 'This is hell, but I am here with you, trying to be here, help you, support you in your health.' That's it. That's all I know. But it's important.

Henry Marsh: I will say something. It's rather hard to follow that story, but I want to talk about a slightly different aspect of loss, which is the loss of inno-

cence of all the young Ukrainian men who are fighting and saving this country at the moment. And many of them, of course, are dying. But post-traumatic stress disorder is almost certainly going to be a big problem.

Now, it's true that if you're fighting for a just cause, unlike, say, the Americans in Vietnam or Iraq, you are less likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder. But these young men are having to do unspeakable, terrible things, even though it is to save their own country. They're having to kill their fellow human beings, and that does not come naturally to most of us. I had a meeting when I was here a couple of months ago with the Minister of Health, Dr Liashko, who was saying his big problem now is trying to organize rehabilitation after the war. And I don't think at the moment people are thinking about that. But it is. Post-traumatic stress disorder for soldiers is a real problem. It's a real issue Ukraine will have to face in the aftermath of the war. Winning the war, which you will do, without very much doubt, is one thing. But then dealing with the aftermath is another.

Although the Ukrainian soldiers who survive will come back as heroes, many of them will have very significant psychological problems, if it's not treated well, for the rest of their lives. And I don't know if at the moment people are thinking about that because it's in the future. But war comes at a terrible price for the soldiers, even though they're heroes fighting to save their country.

Andriy Myzak: Thank you, Henry. Another small remark from me. It has to do with the fact that when we are in mourning for our fallen comrades in arms, for members of our community, for Ukrainians, at the same time we realize that we rejoice in the death of the enemy. And this dualism – this bifurcation of our soul – when we mourn every fresh statistic or the news that somebody we know has died, and at the same time we rejoice in these illustrative pictures of the dead Russians – that is not natural. It's not natural for a human being. It's easy to say 'Death to enemies' – we say this. While it seems easy to live with this now, won't it be another aspect of post-traumatic stress? Maybe Yurko will say something on this topic?

Yurko Prokhasko: You know how to choose difficult questions, Andriy. You are great at this, it's true. Yes, I might want to start from the past. Namely from 2014 at the latest, and in fact, from 2004, 2005. I'm talking about hate. Obviously, we are all now inflamed in hatred, and hatred in the time of war is something that is fundamentally necessary. A fundamentally necessary, welcome anthropological phenomenon without which we cannot compete, without which we cannot fight, without which we cannot defend ourselves. And this hate works in the same way as the feeling of guilt, for example. An adult can hardly live his or her life without this feeling of guilt. But one should also understand that this is our fate. As humans, we are doomed to having this feeling of guilt. Sometimes this guilt becomes not only a feeling, but also a real guilt. Sometimes this feeling of guilt exists without real guilt.

Obviously, when we hate, we feel guilty. But there are times when we hate and understand that it is not just something present, but also necessary. Because a person who does not hate cannot compete. The one who does not hate now has much lower chances not only to survive, but also to protect, not only oneself, but also one's family, one's world. In that sense, hatred is simply something fundamental; a basic premise of struggle, of existence, of survival. But also, and perhaps most importantly, of something that I call sense-making, because how else can we see the difference between the perpetrator, between the wrongdoer and the one to whom the wrong was done, if we do not have this possibility of dichotomy of love and hatred in the soul. At the same time, we must also remember that hatred is also the reverse – the flip side – of love. Hate is not just anti-love, but it is the opposite side of love. And here I return to the year 2005 and to those reasons why our hatred for Russians, for Russia, for the Russian system, for the Russian way of treating us is not something new, but rather old.

We were very proud and we were very happy, and we considered it one of our greatest achievements and treasures, that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we, the Ukrainian society, managed to preserve internal civil peace. It was of great value to us that we were able not only to preserve civil peace, but that we managed, that we carried out this emancipation without war, it was far from self-evident. And the fact that this war was instilled so long, so persistently, so persistently instilled in us by Russia in order for us to leave this non-war state, in order for us to get into the war, in order for the war to come to us. It was done for a long time and persistently. And we've been watching it for years. At least since 2005. All this led to the fact that our hatred accumulated, it was growing, it was getting more intense. Of course, the quality of this hatred is different now. Not only the measure, but also the quality, but this hatred is far from something new.

We attached a lot of importance to the freedom to lead our lives on our terms, according to our taste, according to our beliefs. For us, it was a huge value, which we so aspired to for so long. And these persistent efforts of Russia, the

Russian system, the Russians to prevent us from doing that, to disrupt these aspirations for us, to spoil these efforts of ours to build a sensible, good, imperfect – obviously imperfect – but good coexistence according to our ideas, according to our needs, also led for a long time to the growth of that hatred, because it was absolutely obvious how persistently it was being done.

So why do we wonder now? It is clear that we fear for our souls, it is clear that we know that hate kills our souls, hate saves our lives now, but maybe hate kills our souls. And the question is: which is more important. If hatred is a prerequisite for survival and defence, then we are willing to make this sacrifice now, knowing that it will affect our souls. Knowing that evil is not good, that the triumph of death is not good, that rejoicing at the death is not good, that it also harms us. And this is the choice.

And here I finally come to my last point. I think it's very important to make another distinction, the distinction between being a victim or being wronged? When we, as the wronged, wage war, it is good for us. The advantage for us is that we are not attackers. It is good for us that we did not want this war. We tried to avoid it as long as we could. It is a good thing for us that we are not overwhelmed with chauvinism, ressentiment, revisionism, and in that sense it is a good thing for us that we did not attack, but we were attacked. And then it's easier to hate because then something we call righteous anger comes into play. Perhaps these are outdated categories of just and unjust war. Righteous anger and, for example, blind destructive rage. But actually these concepts mean a lot to me now, because when we wage a righteous war, we can also hate righteously. We know that we did not choose that war, but it happened, and we also understand that we did not choose that hatred, but it befell us, and now we cannot do otherwise.

I have no doubt that the time will come when we will be able to view those whom we kill differently. But we can never be able to see those who attack us differently. And here for me, and this is the final point, there is an important differentiation that we manage to make – the difference between the victim and the wronged party. Yes, we are the wronged, we are the offended and those offended who defended themselves. But this should not mean that we are victims, because being a victim is much worse than being the wronged party who knows how to defend oneself and is able to defend oneself. And the hatred of the victim is also very different from the hatred of the righteous wronged, who righteously defends oneself.

Andriy Myzak: My question for Rachel is the following. In your book you describe the loss of your nearest and dearest. Many people are trying to somehow ease the pain of loss by being active, helping other people. In our situation in Ukraine, we lose our loved ones not as a result of natural processes, such as death or illness, which, to put it bluntly, is a natural process. We lose our relatives and loved ones due to violent death. And what Yurko has just said about feeling offended and righteous anger, strangely enough, is a coping mechanism, a mechanism to manage pain, cope with pain. Any activity born as a result of righteous anger, perhaps, helps us cope with our pain.

Two short examples from my life. A nineteen-year-old boy from one of the settlements near Lysychansk has been in my clinic for three months. He is a European champion in speed climbing, a third-year student of Kyiv National University, Faculty of International Economics. Unfortunately, the prognosis is not good from my perspective as a neurosurgeon. And every day his father, who is younger than me, sits by his bed and says, 'As soon as my son is stable' – as soon as we stabilize him in a way that the blood pressure is normal, the heartbeat is OK – 'I will join the armed forces and go to the front to kill them.'

The second story is about my colleague, a small, frail traumatologist-orthopedic doctor who fled Luhansk in 2014 and brought over her family, children, her mother and father. They happily settled in Bucha. Oksana was at work with her husband when her dad and mom finally decided to run away from Bucha to Stoyanka, using Zhytomyr highway. Everyone who is a Ukrainian, who is familiar with toponymy, knows … well, nowadays everyone knows Bucha. And this old Zhyguli car was shelled by the Russian troops and Oksana's mother and father were simply shot by Russians, it was just a civilian car. Oksana's mother was killed immediately, she fell on the seat belts, her father was wounded and barely managed to get out of the car. He was able to crawl to the forest and survive, her mother simply burned in the car. Her dad immediately realized that his wife was dead.

Oksana has always been a hard-working person; now she works perhaps ten times more than before. She founded a charity in her mother's name, in which she does fundraising. She travels constantly between Kyiv and Ivano-Frankivsk, and spends days and nights in the operating room, providing medical assistance to refugees and our military men. So, no matter how awful it sounds, the special conditions in which we live now, and that is exactly what Yurko was talking about, this righteous anger, and desire for revenge and hatred, it gives us strength to survive, survive and continue living with this pain.

Rachel Clarke: Again, a very difficult question.

Andriy Myzak: Just a remark.

Rachel Clarke: Yes. So, in response, grief, losing someone you love, even in peacetime – put aside all these horrors for a moment. When you lose someone you love, there is no neat package for grief. Grief is messy and violent and ugly and chaotic and can take absolutely any and every form. Grief is as individual as the individuals who are grieving.

Sometimes doctors and writers will sort of talk about the stages of grief as though somehow there is a right way to grieve. There is no right way to grieve. Many people in the throes of immediate loss will feel nothing but a kind of boiling, anarchic, terrifying internal destruction. They're just a mess. And those ugly, violent feelings can continue rearing their head over and over and over again, and maybe five years after you have lost someone, something will trigger a resurgence of all those violent feelings. And that's, in inverted commas, 'normal grief'. This is not the grief of someone who has lost their eighteen-year-old son, who has suffered in unspeakable circumstances on the front line here in Ukraine.

So now you put on top of all of that violent, chaotic emotion, the additional layer of emotions that, of course, you are going to feel when you know your children, your brothers, your sisters, your husbands have been murdered. They may have been tortured. Terrible, unspeakable things. How can you possibly live with the emotions that unleashes? And I don't have an easy or a trite answer for that, except … I suppose, firstly, no matter how consumed with rage and anger and hatred and revenge you feel, none of that is wrong. All of that, all of those feelings, however black and dark and wrong they feel, they are human. They are the inevitable, immediate human response to what you are having to feel and endure and what has been inflicted upon you by the enemy.

So, don't beat yourself up for feeling like that, that is human. You wouldn't be a human being if you weren't feeling those things. Maybe try not to act upon them. If you are a soldier on the front line, absolutely. You need those feelings in part to fight to commit acts which are not normal. Killing other human beings is an act of war. You maybe need what you've described – the hatred – to do that. If you're not a soldier, if you're not engaged day to day in the acts of war, feel those

feelings. Try not to allow them to dictate your actions, the course of your life. I would say that, not as a moral imperative, but because as a human being, it is no way to live your life if you are consumed by hate, understandable hatred, understandable thoughts of revenge, of violence. In the end, it is you who suffers as a consequence. And I suppose what you could try to do – you could never, ever stop feeling anger and hatred towards the people who have taken the life of the one you love so dearly – but what you can do and what is surely the best and most meaningful memorial for the one you have lost is to hold them alive in your heart.

I remember when my father – soon before my father died, I loved him dearly … One day, I couldn't stop crying. The thought of losing him just made me like a child, an adult crying like a child. He took my hand and he put it on his heart and he said: 'Rachel, I will always live in here. Every time you feel sad that I have gone, that pain is your love for me. That pain is my love for you.' Grief is the form that love takes when somebody dies. It is love living on inside your broken heart. I think the more we can try to stay connected to the pain, which is simultaneously the love living on for the person who has died, the more we are able to maintain our humanity. And I don't know, I don't feel as I can suggest how you live with your individual and collective pain. But that's how I try to live with my little bits of pain. It is remembering that pain, that grief – it is the love that has been transformed through death.

Andriy Myzak: Thank you, Rachel. Pain has always been a companion to love, and pain is the inevitable payment for love. I remember that in his first book Henry says that the thing he is afraid of most of all is not pain, most of all he is afraid of becoming insensitive to pain. Now let's deviate from the topic of war and come back to the doctors.

We now have two doctors – a neurosurgeon and an expert in palliative medicine – who feel other people – their patients. I must tell you that modern mainstream medicine is not like that at all. Many or most doctors view patients as objects rather than subjects, even though with good intentions. That object must be cured. Or that object is … For example, I often scold my junior doctors when they are happy that some interesting case has arrived. A person can never be an interesting case. Behind every interesting case there is a person.

My question for both of you is: how do you manage to still see your patients as subjects rather than objects? And my second question: how do you manage to remain subjects, not objects. Because the modern system of medicine often

turns doctors into mere objects, tools, tools for providing medical care. And often doctors lose this attitude to the people around them. Often, the feeling of empathy, of compassion is lost. What is the recipe not to treat a patient as an object? And what is the recipe for all those who offer treatment – for doctors, for medical workers – not to turn into objects, tools of the health care system.

Henry Marsh: Well, it's a very important and very difficult question. Rachel and I, in a sense, we practise opposite ends of medicine. I would say palliative care, and I think Rachael agrees with me, is comfort care. That is not to diminish it in any way, but you are trying to make your patients as comfortable as possible in their final illness. You do not have to take onto your shoulders the burden of trying to keep them alive, of doing dangerous, difficult operations which might go wrong, which, as a neurosurgeon, Andriy and I have to do, though I've retired now. And it's very difficult. You have to be detached to some extent. If you become too involved emotionally with your patients, you cannot do the work. When you walk into the operating theatre, to some extent you have to see the patient as a sort of object. But what makes surgery so exciting is actually your deep concern and anxiety that the patient should survive and do well.

So it's a very, very difficult balancing act. It is like being on a tightrope, which applies for all doctors, except perhaps palliative care doctors, where you try to find a balance between being kind and caring and being scientifically detached, not cold, but almost abstract.

And I'll tell you something: when I was operating, all I wanted to do was operate. I loved patient care. I liked looking after patients and talking to them, but I wanted to operate. And the more dangerous for the patient, the more dangerous and difficult the operation was, the more I wanted to do it. And an important part of learning in surgery is learning when not to do an operation, to learn to overcome your deep excitement and wish to do big, difficult operations. As you get older and wiser, you get better, you learn your own limitations. You learn what you can and cannot do. It's a difficult balancing act. You live very, very intensely when you're operating. And I had, dare I say, a very, very big surgical practice. I was one of the busiest neurosurgeons in Britain. It was all I wanted to do. Do I miss it? No. I'm so glad not to be doing it now because I feel a more complete human being again. I no longer have to divide the human race and the patients I operate on, and us, the medical profession who are kind of above the patients.

I've written a third book, which will be my last book, so it is called *And Finally,* which I hope will be published in Ukraine next year. My wonderful translator,

Dr Myzak, is working on it at the moment and in it – it's about many things, but I'll tell the story, if you'll excuse me – I've been diagnosed with advanced cancer and with an uncertain prognosis, so I don't know how much longer I will live. But is always a very interesting process for a doctor to become a patient. And although I knew that it was a very humiliating, demeaning, institutionalizing experience to be a patient, it was still very interesting to walk into the cancer hospital where I'd been the senior neurosurgeon for thirty years, and to actually feel my height sort of shrink like that. I had become a patient. One of the underclass. I was no longer the big important surgeon. And yet to do dangerous surgery you have to have a high opinion of yourself. You have to believe in yourself. If you're too worried and anxious, you cannot do the operating. So, again, a very difficult balance. And different personalities will get the balance right or wrong to a certain extent.

One of the big problems in Ukraine, it was the Soviet tradition where doctors were employed by the state. You could not criticize or take legal action against the state. And I've seen some truly terrible examples over the years in Ukraine of neurosurgeons doing bad operations, ruining patients, and then just walking away with no sense of responsibility whatsoever. But there are bad doctors all over the world. That, again, is part of your Russian Soviet legacy, which you are trying to escape and which you are fighting for. And it has been very wonderful, over thirty years – I have this enormous privilege of having been coming to Ukraine for thirty years –to see that freedom and liberty and good medical behaviour by doctors who are breaking out. And that's wonderful.

Andriy Myzak: By the way, *I naostanok [And Finally]* – this will be the Ukrainian title of the latest book by Dr Marsh. *I naostanok*, I'd like to hear Rachel's view, because we're almost at the end of our conversation, about how one can remain a subject and not look at a patient as an object.

[Henry Marsh excuses himself to attend another event and leaves the auditorium.]

Rachel Clarke: So that question – how do we balance our detachment and our empathy as a doctor? – is, I believe, actually a question for all of us as human beings. It doesn't just apply to the medical profession. And of course it's particularly pertinent given what we've been discussing about the absolute detachment that is required as a soldier in order to kill other human beings. So it's the extreme end of what we have to balance as doctors.

I think what everybody has to balance as a human being in our interactions with others, we can't allow ourselves to feel with no limits the pain of another human being because we'd just cry, wouldn't we? We wouldn't be able to function. And conversely, the more detached we are, the more able we are to behave cruelly with lack of compassion, to hurt others intentionally or unintentionally.

But in medicine, it's a particularly important challenge because on the one hand, if you are too emotionally engaged, you become unable to do your job. So, for example, if my heart stops beating and I'm in hospital, I want the emergency crash team of doctors to arrive, preferably within thirty seconds, and I want them to be machines. I want them to be hard as nails. I want them to do the job of starting my heart. And if any of them dithers and gets confused because they're emotional, I'm going to be infuriated because that decreases my chance of surviving. So there's a time and a place for absolute hard-as-nails machine, do that job. And when you have your hands inside someone's brain, as Henry spent a lifetime doing, you need to be hard as nails. However, if you are unable to put yourself in your patient's shoes and see and imagine, at least to some extent, what it is like for them, you are at grave risk of unintentionally hurting that patient.

I remember once when I was a medical student, seeing a patient with a consultant – a very eminent consultant – and some other doctors. The patient had a cancer that had invaded the whole body, and as we left the patient, the doctor turned and said to us: 'There's nothing for us to do here. Send them to the palliative dustbin'. About a human being, about a patient. And I stirred and had to fight with myself not to say, 'That is completely unacceptable.' I figured that would just make things worse.

As medical students, nobody tells you that this is a hard challenge. You are taught about body parts. You are not taught about human beings. In British medical schools, you are taught about the liver, how it goes wrong, how you fix it; the brain, how it goes wrong, how you fix it. You are taught about body parts. Nobody says the hardest thing that you will have to face as a doctor is the cost to yourself and your soul of navigating these waters that are filled with human suffering. While trying to do your job and simultaneously remain a human being. It's not normal. It's not natural. It's something you have to learn. And the most important thing, I believe, that as senior doctors we can communicate to

juniors and to students is the fact that it's difficult. If we are honest and we say, 'Look, this is hard. You are going to hold someone in your arms as they die, and then you're going to have to go and tell their family that they have died, or that you have carried out the operation on their brain that has killed them. You are going to have to do that *well*. The job of doing that is something you are going to have to do well, because if you don't, you're only going to hurt those human beings more, and that's a hard thing to do.'

If you are taught about that from the outset, you can learn strategies for managing this very, very difficult territory. It's not easy, and everybody engaged in the business of providing health care should be striving to do it as well as we can and teaching it as well as we can to others. And every hospital in the world would be a more humane and less frightening place if we all stepped up and tried to do this. And I hope that we'll be talking about this, among other matters, as we're going to be teaching medical students over the next few days. But it's the essence, I think, of being a good doctor and it should be taught as such from day one of medical school.

Andriy Myzak: Rachel, thank you. Thank you, Yurko. Thank you, dear listeners and participants. I really enjoyed this conversation, I hope you did too. I hope this hour and a half was not time you wasted. I believe that in war time we don't have the right to waste time. Thank you.

Women and War

Participants: Diana Berg (Chair), Victoria Amelina, Lydia Cacho, Janine di Giovanni and Emma Graham-Harrison
Pre-recorded video message: Yaryna Chornohuz

Diana Berg: I'm Diana Berg and I'm honoured to chair the panel discussion on Women and War. Before presenting our speakers, I want to thank everyone who supported this event. The 'Women and War' panel is part of the Lviv Book-Forum. The International Book Forum is supported by USAID – the US Agency of International Development, and by Open Society Foundation. It takes place in the UK–Ukrainian culture season supported by the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute. We are very grateful to everyone who made this happen. In today's discussion, 'Women and War', we have brilliant women speakers. Let me introduce them.

Emma Graham-Harrison is a British journalist – the senior international affairs correspondent for the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers. You have covered wars in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria and Zimbabwe. Emma was named Foreign Correspondent of the Year in 2018 by the National Press awards.

Lydia Cacho is a journalist, social activist and writer specializing in gender violence and organized crime. Lydia is a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes and the co-founder of the Mexican, Central American and the Caribbean Journalists Network. You have won fifty-five awards on international works of investigative journalism.

Janine di Giovanni was a combat and war reporter for more than thirty years. She has covered eighteen wars and published nine books on war and conflict, mainly focused on human rights and war crimes. She's covered three of Putin's wars, in Chechnya, Syria and Ukraine. And now Janine is a co-founder and director of The Reckoning Project, an organization that documents and verifies war crimes and builds cases for international justice mechanisms.

Victoria Amelina is a Ukrainian writer and human rights activist based in Kyiv. She is the winner of the Joseph Conrad Literature Prize for her prose works, including the novels *Dom's Dream Kingdom* and *Fall Syndrome*. She is the founder of a literature festival in the Donetsk region – in Niu-York, Donetsk Oblast. And you've also been documenting war crimes this year.

Victoria Amelina

We have one more important speaker, Yaryna Chornohuz, who was supposed to join us online. Yaryna Chornohuz is a Ukrainian poet and writer. She is a member of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in the Russian–Ukrainian war. She's the author of the collection *How the Military Circle Bends,* and she is now a combat medic. She has been on the front line since 2019, and it's her fourteenth month of rotation. She's been fighting in Lugansk, in the Donetsk region, and now in Severodonetsk, Bakhmut, and all the red-hot spots in Ukraine. Now she's participating in counter-offensive operations in the most acute directions. Unfortunately, Yaryna can't join us because she's right now on a combat mission where, as we know, there is no good connection. But we do have her video that she recorded for our panel. So I want to first watch this video, and this way Yaryna will participate, at least in this way, in our discussion.

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Yaryna Chornohuz ***[pre-recorded video]:*** I was invited to share my thoughts on the topic of 'Women and War' and how the struggle of Ukrainian women is changing the global feminist movement. And of course I have [things] to say about it, first of all as a military person.

On the subject of the global feminist movement, we just spent the last seven days in Washington and New York, where we met with US congressmen, senators and representatives of the Pentagon and talked about the need for weapons. Our mission was successful, [and] I want to say that military women from the front from Ukraine are perceived with incredible respect. The previous delegation consisted of Ukrainian pilots, and the pilots also had incredible respect, but it is specifically the Ukrainian women who fight who impress absolutely everyone. Every day we had more than five interviews and a lot of meetings, and everybody listened to them with bated breath. [Nevertheless,] the girls from the Women's Veterans Movement said that before 24 February 2022, when the trench war began, they had encountered a very prejudiced attitude from other feminist organizations, both Ukrainian and foreign, on the topic of war and women's participation in war.

For many feminists in the world, war and the Army were perceived as a purely male affair where there is a space of preserved patriarchy and where a woman who is a feminist can neither express herself nor have real freedom, because she faces a lot of restrictions. Of course, there is a wonderful movie *G.I. Jane*, which everyone loves, but it is a movie, not reality, which often dictates its own rules. The full-scale war and the women participants in the hostilities who managed to get through it alive, who died, who were wounded, who were captured – all of them are an opportunity for feminists from all over the world to rethink a lot in this direction.

Modern warfare is largely old-industrial, that is, it is a war of physical endurance. Although this is a war of artillery and long distances, it is also a war of great physical endurance. If Simone de Beauvoir once wrote in her book *The Second Sex* that the dominance of men in the primitive era was dictated precisely by physical superiority, then I can say – as a woman who is constantly on the front lines with her unit and is the only one in a combat position in her battalion – I can say that all of it feels fresh, it really does. You constantly have to prove that you are physically capable of performing those tasks, physically and morally, and if you do it constantly and in a motivated way, then you gain respect and have an equal place with everyone. Although, of course, many men will never accept this in their hearts. And this is our experience: unfortunately, there are not many girls like us and discrimination in the Army against women in combat positions is still quite strong, that is, only a few units manage to get to the front line. But I believe that there will be more motivated women and this will change sooner or later.

It is worth saying that in American society, they are really impressed by women who are participants in combat operations in such a war as Russia is currently waging against Ukraine, but for them a soldier is a person without a gender. This is, whether you are a man or a woman does not matter, because you are a soldier. And I really like it. This is not the case for everyone in the feminist movement. Some believe that a woman always remains a woman with her own special features. I believe that if a woman goes to war as a combatant, she must be a soldier. That is, gender definitely takes the second place. War is a non-gendered thing.

Another issue is women who became participants or victims in another way. These are volunteers and women who continue to live in the occupied territories along with children, those who were evacuated, who were able to survive the occupation, and became witnesses of the occupation, especially those women who are currently overcoming the consequences of violence, rape, and physical abuse from the Russian occupiers. And in this regard, our experience should turn the global feminist movement to the question of how colonialism, the tyrannical imperialism that exists in Russia, and the perception of women as victims and trophies in this war, intersect. Because civilian women caught in war and occupation are often a trophy associated with victory for invaders and occupiers. And this is the most disgusting thing in this whole story. And our

war provides such a bitter opportunity to study this and take the study of this traumatic experience to another level.

I'm proud that I am Ukrainian, because in this struggle, in this war, Ukrainian women showed themselves from an amazing side: as free people. I would not like to be among Russian women oppressed by patriarchy in this war, whose sons, husbands and brothers are now committing unprecedented violence against our people, against our children and relatives – and at whose hands our best mean and women are dying in the ranks of the Armed Forces. Glory to Ukraine!

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Diana Berg: I wish I could thank Yaryna personally for this powerful speech, and I think that she has definitely set the direction for our discussion. I wish her and her battalion only victory and send all of the warmth and gratitude to our soldiers – Yaryna and others. In fact, Yaryna is one of 50,000 women that in the Ukrainian Armed Forces; only 37,000 of these women are officially enrolled. It constitutes around 12 per cent of our Army, which is around the average NATO country level – the percentage of women in the Army. My first question is for Emma. Do you see any new tendencies in Army and gender dynamics in this war, compared to other wars that you've covered? And from a historical perspective, how can we see these gender dynamics?

Emma Graham-Harrison: Thanks for the question. I think it's really interesting because one of the things about the way we discuss women in combat today is this idea that it's relatively new – that we are pushing into a patriarchal space that has been dominated by men, and that it has only historically been men who wage war. You know, [Yaryna] mentioned the idea that men are stronger. And I think one of the things that's interesting is – we're going through a time of reassessing how we think about history, not just as regards women, but as regards indigenous people, people of colour – and if you look back historically, women, when they've had the chance, have always participated in war as fighters. Fighting – as in Ukraine – for their country, for their people, for their families.

In fact, if you go back thousands of years to Mariupol, where women have been a key part of the fight against the Russian invasion, you have the Scythian warriors, who were the historical basis for the Greek myth of Amazons, who for

a long time were dismissed as a mythical construct – you know, this idea of women warriors. And in recent years, archaeologists, who always – they dug up graves of Scythians and they thought anyone found with weapons is a man. And then science advanced, they started looking into the DNA, and discovered that about a third of the skeletons buried with weapons were women. And in fact, if you're on a horse and using a bow and arrow, there are skills that are far more important than your physical strength: being able to ride your horse well, being able to manage a bow and arrow. So women were an integral part of that warrior society.

We can look, for instance, at Africa, where in what is today's Benin there was a kingdom, the Dahomey Kingdom, I hope I'm pronouncing that right, where there was an elite corps of women warriors. Thousand-strong. For hundreds of years from the 1600s until the 1900s. An all-women warrior corps, who the West dubbed (in what I would say is a slightly dismissive way – the Western explorers, people writing about the region) as the African Amazons. But they, too, were incredibly ferocious, much-feared, battle-hardened, brilliant warriors. They trained by storming battlements covered with thorn bushes. They were trained to endure pain, to execute without mercy. They had a very fierce training.

I've just been in Mexico, where I was taken around the National Museum by an archaeologist who told me that Mexico's own tradition of women warriors within the pre-Hispanic indigenous tradition was essentially wiped out by Spanish historians who wrote about, for instance, the 'last stand'. They describe the last stand of one of the Aztec cities, and how Spanish historians wrote [about it was] the inhabitants were so desperate that women took up arms. [The archaeologist] said, actually, fighting with the type of weapons that the Aztecs had was something you had to train for years. It was a highly specialized thing. That is a historical document. He showed me several of the carvings and he said, 'Look at these warriors. They have breasts.' They were just ignored for years by archaeologists, again, by, you know, historians in the colonial tradition. And he said that every time there was a statue of a woman, it was just dismissed as a fertility statue. This must be a fertility goddess. A fertility statue. Actually, lots of them – if you examine them – are statues of female warriors.

So I think it's really important. Yes, there are obviously physical disadvantages. Yes, war is almost always waged in a patriarchal context by men. Certainly, today, women as fighters are in a minority. But I think it's really, really important when we're thinking about history from a feminist perspective, thinking about women and their place in war, their rightful place, when they want it, to fight for

the things they care about – their countries, their families – that women have always fought and fought very effectively and powerfully. And when they've wanted to, they've been able to serve as powerful warriors. So when we talk about women in war, we must talk about them having always had opportunities to be participants in some context. Historically, women have wanted to fight.

That said, you asked about other wars, and there is a big difference. Perhaps the country where I spent the majority of my time in the last ten years has been Afghanistan, and that's a country where the most misogynist rulers in the world have recently come to power. And one aspect of that is that it's been very hard for women to participate in the war. There were, again, a small number of incredibly brave women who took up jobs in the security forces with the police, as pilots, who, again, wanted to fight for their country. But they were very much a minority. And for women in Afghanistan, you do see a difference that it's much harder to be an active participant in the war, even if you want to. And obviously inside the Taliban, there isn't any room for female commanders. There was a wonderful – there was one woman, very brutal but very feared, who was called Commander Pigeon (Comandante Kaftar), who was a female warlord in northern Afghanistan for much of the last twenty years. So even in that very patriarchal, misogynist context there are women who managed to deploy power. I mean, she was quite abusive, a lot of war crimes attributed to her. She certainly wasn't an example. But I think it's important that women aren't presented only as positive – that women can be complex the way men can be.

Diana Berg: Thank you. You know there was this legend about Amazons in Donbas – in the region near where I come from, I come from Donetsk, Mariupol – and there is this legend, which I am sure it not a legend. There are archaeologists and researchers who say that there were Amazonians – not Amazonians but Scythians. And we have this [idea of] 'the region of powerful women'. Maybe that's why Ukraine is now changing the perspective on gender roles at war as well. And in terms of gender roles at war, I want to ask you, Janine: you've witnessed eighteen wars. Eighteen wars – wow.

Janine di Giovanni: I think it's more, actually, but I've lost count.

Diana Berg: You've also witnessed genocides – three genocides – and you also witnessed three wars that were started by Putin: Chechnya, Syria and now

Ukraine. Do gender roles change within these wars? Or do wars always have the same narratives? Please share your experience.

Janine di Giovanni: So first, thank you for that, Emma. It was very empowering to hear that, because usually [when] I tend to look at the role of women in war, I see it from a very different lens because when I started so many years ago … actually, I was thinking the other day, it's more than half my life I've spent in war zones because I was so young when I started doing this. So the way I look at the world is very different from the way most people look at the world. I see it through a lens of conflict. One thing that I really am very interested in is – now I've transitioned from being a war reporter to running a war crimes project called The Reckoning Project with Nataliya Gumenyuk, the wonderful Ukrainian journalist, and Peter Pomerantsev. And basically, what we do is we collect evidence using methodology that ensures that it could be held to international legal standards. And then we build cases.

So now I'm looking at something different: I'm looking at how wars end, and at accountability. And one thing that I've noticed is that women are so rarely at negotiation tables. Even though women – there have been studies done that say that when women are involved in peace processes, that the cycle of how quickly the wars end is much faster. But women are never utilised in this way. I had to research a paper about this and I went back to that. If any of you have read this wonderful play by Aristophanes, Lysistrata, which is about how women withheld sex from their men until the men stopped fighting in the Trojan Wars and the power that women have. It's a comic play, but it made me think about how under-utilized women are when it comes to negotiations.

The UN passed Resolution 1325 some years ago, which basically pointed out the disproportionate use of force against women in wars. The war that really broke my heart and kind of set my career path was Bosnia, the siege of Sarajevo. I lived in Sarajevo during the siege, and it affected me profoundly for the rest of my life. One of the things that happened in Bosnia was that women were used as – rape was used as more than a tool of war; it was systematic rape to wipe out the Muslim gene pool. So 20,000 women were raped and they were held in camps in towns in eastern Bosnia, places like Foča. They were raped, some of them up to sixteen times a day, purely for the intention of making them pregnant so that their Muslim gene pool would be broken by Serbian soldiers and they would give birth to children that were no longer Muslim. 20,000 women – when you think about it…

And yet in the aftermath of the war only a handful of people were indicted and prosecuted for this. I would go back to Bosnia for years after this and see some of these women who had given birth to babies who were born out of this extraordinary violence, and I would wonder why there was no… When justice is not delivered to a country, when peace eventually comes, violence will return. You can never have peace unless the peace deals that are done incorporate transitional justice. And so that's why Peter and Nataliya and I really formed The Reckoning Project.

But I want to get back to – how do we get women to the table to negotiate peace deals? How do we get into this traditionally very sexist world? Well, right now, around the world, there are so many wars that are stalled, but primarily I'm thinking of places I worked in, which are Syria and Yemen as well as Ethiopia (another ongoing conflict that seems to have no end to its brutality): we train them. And I think one of the extraordinary things is the role in the Ukrainian war that civil society has right now – we just saw that Sasha [Oleksandra] Matviichuk won the Nobel Prize. Controversially, because of the others who won it alongside of her. But civil society now can contribute so much to negotiations. To ending wars. And coming from a grassroots level.

One thing that was extremely important during the Bosnian war were the mothers of Srebrenica – Srebrenica being one of the genocides that Diana mentioned that I – horribly – witnessed. Srebrenica, Rwanda and the Yazidi slaughter were three genocides that were in my life. The mothers of Srebrenica took a really firm stand against their 8,000 fighters and young men who were killed in the summer of 1995. They had an extraordinary impact. And the same during the second Chechen war – the mothers of the fighters in Chechnya. So women do have this power at a very grassroots level.

The other thing is – one of the greatest disappointments of my life was Asma al-Assad, the wife of Bashar al-Assad, who could have taken a stand against her husband killing children. She, in fact, ran a children's charity. And the same with Marina Markovic, who was the wife of Slobodan Milosevic. So women can play this very powerful role, as well as actively getting more women trained to be negotiators. And I don't know if this is politically incorrect to say, but women are better negotiators, because we're used to balancing and juggling so many different things. And, again, there have been many reports which show that when women are actually involved in a peace process, we get a hell of a lot more done.

So that's really what I wanted to point out, taking on from Emma's brilliant talk about – that women warriors actually do exist. Women negotiators, women in levels of power must be trained, and we have to work on that. That's something those of you who come from civil society – we should be thinking about getting more Ukrainian women trained from a grassroots level to work in Track Two diplomacy. 'Track Two', for those of you who don't know: Track One is the elite, the UN and governments; Track Two is where the magic really happens. Track Two is getting the faith-based leaders, the community leaders, civil society, and the women together to make peace. That's really my message for today. And I'm just very humbled to be on a panel with such wonderful women, thank you.

Diana Berg: Thank you, Janine. I just want to comment on your memories of the siege in Sarajevo, because I have also survived the siege of Mariupol. And it really is something that you remember forever. So I can relate to that very much. And you brought up this topic of this wide spectrum of roles women can play and are playing within the war. It's not only women combatants, but also women like mothers, women in captivity, women who become victims of rape, of torture, of trafficking – we saw so many cases of women and children deported to Russia, from Mariupol, violently – and also roles like refugee mothers who go abroad and so on. We women of Ukraine are trying ourselves in so many different emerging roles.

I want to ask Lydia how important it is to actually – because you have this initiative for women who undergo violence, gender-based violence – how important is it to document or to investigate or to raise the visibility? Can it actually be empowering? Just as empowering as seeing women combatants like Yaryna? So I know it's a very sensitive question. But still, can you tell us about your role?

Lydia Cacho: Thank you so much. Thank you to everyone in the Hay Festival for bringing us over here. And to both of you *[gestures to Emma and Janine]* for this background conversation, which is really helpful. I think that we have to begin going deeper into the issue, as you already set the standards for the conversation. And I would begin by stating the obvious, which is that war is a political instrument, but it's also a portrait of reality. There's gender violence all over the world in all of our societies, and it's directly linked to the way we are seen in our society, in this case as women and girls are seen, and in Ukrainian society and in Russian society, and how war is just bringing the best and the worst

of human beings, but also it's bringing the battle of gender violence, and how women have learned along the years, thanks to feminism, to join this kind of battle in an intellectual world, in a cultural world, of course, and in war, and in peace processes. Right? So you explained it pretty well.

Then from there we go to the very difficult task to differentiate where we stand politically – that has to be an ethical position and a moral position – and where our feelings are when war is happening, like right now. And then what's our political strategy to face that problem? That's what I do. I map out realities as a reporter, and I've been doing that for thirty-five years, and I founded a high-security shelter for victims of extreme violence in Mexico.

And I discovered twenty years ago that I'm a war reporter in my own country – it sounds weird but it's true, because in 1994, when I started investigating the killings of women in Ciudad Juarez [at a time when] nobody went there, up north – then I understood. I understood there was something there. That the state was looking the other way while women were being killed. A very specific kind of girl: very young women. And the numbers increased and we denounced it. And then they kept increasing and increasing. And right now, we have more than 57,000 women who have been killed and none of those crimes have been solved. And then we have 100,000 disappeared people. And the ones who are looking for the bodies are the mothers and the sisters. They created a system – an amazing, extraordinary system – to look for the bodies, to find them. They brought scientists with them from civil society movements because the government is not participating. Is it another form of genocide? When a government, for twenty years, keeps looking the other way while their population – a specific group of the population – as women, children, and young men are being assassinated because they have a voice. And I think the answer is 'Yes'.

Another thing is that, if we go to the other spectrum of emotions, we would have to say not all women are good people. A lot of them, like the wives of these dictators.

Diana Berg: *[jokingly]* No, we all are good people!

Lydia Cacho: I think that's really important to state this because a lot of people like violence. They like to exercise violence. They want to become soldiers. They want to kill someone. They want revenge, and that's on them. And then

some women just are freaking brave and incredibly intelligent and get into these battles in order to win a war and to change the country and to bring peace processes. So if we see the complete map of reality, then we start seeing what makes us so uncomfortable when we say, 'Oh, women are so good, they want to go to war.' Well, they are defending their country because somebody wants to destroy the people and the country and take over again – and again and again. And that's OK. But then what happens when they retire? When the troops retire? What happens with the incredible post-traumatic stress syndrome of half of the population, at least? Not only women, but also men? What happens to them? Who's taking care of that? Women.

Good women are doing that all over the world, from Syria to Turkey to Mexico, everywhere around the world. In Ukraine, all the activists who are focusing not only on peace processes (and yes, of course, these require more tools to do so), the ones who are helping society to survive, are women. And a lot of men who went to war also suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome, when what happens is that they stay in this state of revenge and suffering and depression and anguish. And most of them – as we've seen with all the wars in the world, as we have documented with the Vietnam War and Iraq and Afghanistan – they just go back home and they can't do anything for society. Most of them, the great majority. And women –the ones who survived rape, torture, incarceration, persecution, even forced pregnancies by soldiers – they become activists. That's a real role of women, how we grasp power in a different way that is not the patriarchal narrative of war. That is what we feminists, most of us, are saying.

War is the daughter – the main daughter – of the patriarchal system, because of the way it's structured: it's meant to destroy men, to make them heartless, to destroy their emotions, and to make them more cruel; as cruel as their leader. We have one that is trying to destroy Ukraine and we understand that kind of leader who is the son of patriarchy. And then we have the possibility to question ourselves if we are portraying and repeating the roles of the patriarchal system within the war. It's not the same thing to decide to go, like Yaryna, as a soldier to save your country as it is to repeat the exact roles that warriors expect of men or women. Because if we do, we don't change anything. When you have to take a gun to defend the children in a small town, you do it of course – I'm not a fool. But after that, what do you do with that? How do you handle that as a female warrior? How do you handle the power that has been given to you as someone that has to kill to defend your own people? How do you internally deal with that violence that the patriarchal system is bringing to us? I think those

are the questions – mental health within war and why women are taking care of that.

I'm going to finish with this because I've been covering – I travel around 147 countries to document violence against women and human trafficking, and how the organized crime systems and governments linked to organized crime, including the Russian government and the Russian mafia, are working through the war and making more and more money from human trafficking, especially with women and boys and girls. But if we understand the power struggle within that, and who wins more within the war, and how cultural values of the patriarchal system become stronger every day. And sometimes we attach to them because that's what we always do as underdogs around the world – it doesn't matter if you're a woman or a man. When we see our lives in danger, what we usually do emotionally is try to stay on the side of the most powerful person there. Or the most powerful government.

What we are trying to do as feminists around the world is not to do so. To stay an underdog and to create a new form of power in which we, of course, want to change society and the patterns that allow this awful man to become so powerful. So I do believe that the wives of these tyrants were probably happy with the power they had. And they don't want to just lose it. It was the privilege of being with the murderer.

Diana Berg: Thank you. There are so many lessons we will have to learn after this war, as you say. But since we are in the midst of war, we have to act to survive now, right? So yes, indeed, it's obvious from what you said that war can strengthen the stereotypical gender roles. My question is to Victoria: you are a human rights activist. Do you think – because I personally believe so – that war can also bring some emancipatory tendencies? What I'm talking about is that the Istanbul convention was ratified in Ukraine during this war, this year, although feminists and advocates and activists had been trying to make our Government sign it for years and just this spring or summer it was ratified. And civil partnerships were never seriously considered in Ukraine before the invasion started. So what are your observations on this as a human rights activist? Can gender roles be strengthened or shifted during this war?

Victoria Amelina: So first of all, I think already one of the reasons Ukraine will win this war is that Ukraine, unlike Russia, is a liberal democracy. So we might

need to reform some more legislation. We have already ratified the Istanbul convention. But we already have a mindset of liberal democracy. And this means, among other things, that women play a very important, actually crucial role in our society, both in government and civil society. So this is one of the crucial factors for our victory, and I think we all understand it.

Now, I'm a feminist, and I should say that since 2014, since the initial Russian invasion of Ukraine, feminists were fighting for the rights of women to be in the Armed Forces, to be on the front lines and to be equal to men. And it was achieved. And since 2017, the issues that we inherited from the Soviet Army were gone and now wonderful and brave women like Yaryna Chornohuz and many others are fighting alongside men on the front line.

And though I am a feminist, I would like to point out that right now, during the Russian war against Ukraine, I'm not targeted because I'm a woman – I'm being targeted because I'm Ukrainian. And this is a very important point. That's why we are all united, especially the civil society. Civil society now works perfectly with the government – it never happened before because Ukrainians are always trying to criticize their government, this is our spirit – but right now we're working incredibly well together, even in the space of documenting war crimes. Also, right now, civil society and the Army are working together incredibly well, and this of course started in 2014 and we just have to remember all these practices we were doing.

Even women who aren't on the front lines have tried to find their place where they would be most useful for the victory. These women are, for example, purchasing ammunition, cars, drones, whatever, and supplying the Army or, for example, documenting war crimes and ensuring accountability. So many, many roles. Psychologist [is another role] you mentioned, and there is an incredibly efficient hotline for those who were abducted, and of course, women play a key role in that initiative. So many, many roles.

I'm actually writing a book, which is called *War Injustice Diary: Looking at Women, Looking at War,* and I would like to mention some of some of the women I'm writing about. One of them actually won a Nobel Prize today. But the first one will be Yevgenia Zakrevska who was and still is a lawyer who fought for justice for the victims killed during the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. She's an incredible lawyer. Her expertise is beyond anything. But in February, she made a choice to join the Ukrainian Armed Forces and right now she's fighting in the Kharkiv region on the front lines and operating drones. So that's her choice and she's another example like Yaryna Chornohuz.

Also, speaking about women mayors – this is very important. As a liberal democracy, we recently implemented many reforms, and one of them was decentralization. And of course, you can see that the leadership of the country is mostly [made up of] men like Volodymyr Zelensky and Valerii Zaluzhnyi. But survival in the occupied towns and villages depends on who the mayor is. And this is very important that Ukraine is so decentralized, again, unlike Russia. So even if a village is occupied and there is no connection, you can't get through to anyone, you have a mayor – and these mayors are often women – and you can somehow manage. I've met some of these wonderful women mayors who often have to evacuate because Russians target Ukrainian elites. I actually wanted to mention one name: Olga Sukhenko, a woman mayor of Motyzhyn in in the Kyiv region. And many of you perhaps heard that she was abducted and killed, together with her husband and son. This is why it is very important to evacuate. But those who evacuate, they keep the connection with their villages. For example, I've seen how one of the women mayors coordinated the evacuation of her villages in the Kherson region to Kryvyi Rih, to safety. And she keeps managing this small universe of these small villages, now packed into some dormitories in the city. This is just an incredible civil society movement.

It is so obvious that both men and women are doing whatever possible for victory, for survival, that I think that it will eventually make – this war, this terrible experience of war will eventually make us more equal.

Diana Berg: Personally, I also do believe that typical gender roles will be shifted, maybe because I'm an optimist. But now we've all have become realists because as you, Victoria just said, this invasion has changed all of us and we all became volunteers. Really, we do everything for the victory. Women, men and all of us. But, you know what? I really think about visibility. About the visibility of women.

Of course, we are all Ukrainians, as you mentioned, we are all as one acting for victory, but both in the Western media, and also in the Ukrainian informational space, I think that… As you said, Zelensky, Zaluzhnyi and all the fighters are the faces of our war and our fight. And we totally need to raise the visibility of women in any role or position. Maybe you all know and remember this movie and the project *Invisible Battalion,* devoted to women who were fighting but not officially registered in the Army. It has changed now, and Yaryna is an example of how women can now serve in any position within the Army, officially. But still, there are so many invisible roles that women take in this war.

I will just mention one example. My husband has organized a system of evacuation, of evacuating people from occupation, from occupied territories to safety, to Zaporizhzhia, It's a very difficult task, very difficult schemes. And one of the best drivers who drives this big bus and who's saved thousands of people by bringing them to safety is a female driver, is a woman. She is the best driver in their organization, but no one knows about her. No one knows, and because on the one hand, it's risky and unsafe to bring up her name and face. But on the other hand, this everyday heroism of women on so many different levels is amazing. And how can we change that? My question is to all of you. You've documented, you've witnessed war… *wars.* How is it possible to do raise [our visibility]? Is it possible to somehow change it?

Janine di Giovanni: There's one thing – and thanks everyone, because I thought that was such a great panel and everyone had such a different perspective and it's so important. I realized I wanted to talk about one thing that I didn't, which was refugees, and women and children who have been displaced in the Ukrainian war. And in 2015, I went to work for the United Nations Refugee Agency in Syria. And, of course, you know, there was a massive outpouring, 7 million people who were expulsed from their country because of Assad's horrific war. Again, and we didn't talk about how Putin was involved in Syria, but of course, he levelled Aleppo the way that he's now destroying Ukraine and had destroyed Chechnya.

But back to the refugees. What really impressed me was that there were so many women. I had to run a project which was called 'Women Alone', and it was about the women who had fled Syria and gone to Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt by themselves because the men were either dead or fighting. I had a small team of researchers, and every day we set out to the camps and we had our very strict methodology that we were following. But the question to these women was: How do you survive? They were taken from their homes. They were ripped away from everything they knew. And of course, as many of you might know, the experience of being a refugee is horrific because I've never met a refugee who wanted to leave their country, which is why President Trump drove me insane with his completely xenophobic attitudes about people trying to come to America. No one wants to leave their home. No one wants to be ripped apart from their photographs, their memories, their roots. But these women had this extraordinarily difficult job of trying to keep in their children's memory their country, Syria, because many of these kids – now the war has

been going on for twelve years – were raised outside of the country and all they knew of their culture was the language and a flag.

So now every time I take the train from Kyiv to Warsaw, the thing that really strikes me is the people boarding the train are all women and they're going to Germany and they're going to France and they're going to places outside of their own country. So one thing I'm thinking of in advance is how do we work on the collective trauma of this country, of people? When the war does end and the war will end, it will eventually end. I know it will. And it needs to end well. And I say that – it's such a strange thing to say, wars ending well. But wars must end well or you will get Bosnia, which ended very badly. There was no transitional justice. And guess what? Putin is now meddling in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska, and there most likely will be a conflict again.

So I think we need to look at other issues, the refugees issue (children that are now outside of Ukraine and are, in Germany for instance, some are in Ukrainian schools, which means they're keeping up the language), but also the trauma that this country has endured. Not just from this war, but throughout history: the Holodomor, World War II, the terrible things that happened here. I think we need to also look at that. And again, this is something women play a very good role in as psychologists and as healers. So to your point, [Lydia], about how we have to make a different narrative … I think we also have to harness our power, our feminine power, into looking at strategies, new strategies of peace process, of negotiation, of healing, of trauma, of bringing the country back together again after such a grievous and terrible war.

Diana Berg: As twice IDP, Internally Displaced Person, I can confirm what you said. I wasn't a refugee because I didn't move to another country – I stayed in Ukraine both in 2014 when Donetsk, my hometown, was actually occupied and now in Mariupol after it was completely destroyed after the siege. So I am twice displaced. It was not my desire to go, to move; indeed, it's very difficult to accept this. And there are so many women who are, again, twice displaced, but even once it's already a trauma. Definitely.

Lydia Cacho: I want to address your question regarding how the press is covering the presence of women in all these different roles, because I think it's so important as a reporter. I always struggle with that when I go to countries – or in my own – in which I know that you have to cover this story, and you really

want to show what women are doing. But then on the other hand, as women are part of this incredible strategy, and it's very political in there, sometimes just working in the underworld of the war is much more important than being present in the media, because you can expose them.

As a reporter for thirty-five years, I know so many of my colleagues in Mexico – especially men colleagues, I have to say – when they cover a part of the war against drugs and these killings, and they go to the feminists who are saving and rescuing, for example, the kids of human trafficking within that war between the government and the narcos, and then all of a sudden these women become targets. So you have to be really careful because the powerful – not only the corrupted government officials that are operating within a war or the soldiers who want to kill people, but also organized crime, which is very present in this region, as we know. We really have to acknowledge that Russian mafia is involved in this war. We cannot deny that.

And when you understand that, you can also understand that a lot of the feminists and the amazing woman doing extraordinary work here to prevent more human trafficking, especially sex trafficking of young Ukrainian woman fleeing the country to Europe, they are the ones that are strategizing to protect them. And if we name their names right now as journalists, we put the whole operation at risk. So what we do is document every name and take photographs and write their biographies, because one of these days when you win the war, we will certainly write books and books about all of you who are doing this extraordinary work. But right now we have to protect you by just looking at these guys – macho guys who are being protagonists – because they are untouchable. Because that's what a patriarchal system does.

Victoria Amelina: I'd like to refer to what Janine was saying about the importance of ending the war well. I think we all here probably agree that in the case of the Russian–Ukrainian war, ending this war well would mean to defeat Russia completely and for Ukraine to restore its territorial integrity. This would mean ending this war well, and this would mean restoring justice. And to overcome trauma, it's very important for the *survivors* – I don't want to use the word victims, survivors – it is very important to see that there is justice and someone is punished for the crimes. So it is very important to have international tribunals for the crime of aggression because this would reach the top table. And everyone in Ukraine would see that the leadership of Russia is punished for this war, but also the international tribunal or some other form to cover all the

war crimes that we, for example, Jeanine and I are right now documenting in Ukraine. And this restoration of justice is very, very important. This would actually be half of the work that needs to be done to overcome trauma, because when we list all the tragedies of the Ukrainian people, starting from the Holodomor, but we could actually start earlier from the massacre in Baturyn, or we can go on and on – there was never justice. So this should, finally, be the success story or the victory story. And then I think maybe the trauma will go – not only this trauma, but the traumas of previous experiences.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Just very quickly, on the question of visibility. I do think you have a problem that comes from having a fundamentally patriarchal structure in every country where there is media. And I just like to bring one example from Afghanistan. After the Taliban came to power, I became extremely frustrated by how the particular situation for women there – what happened in Afghanistan has been a tragedy for many Afghans, not just for women, but women particularly are suffering. And when the Taliban barred girls from high school, we [the *Guardian*] were the first paper to cover it. The *New York Times* didn't cover it for four days. And when I personally contacted some of their reporters to ask them what was going on, they told me, 'That isn't breaking news,' which I found both incredibly patronizing because I've also been a journalist for quite a long time, and I think I have judgment over what's breaking news, and also astonishing.

And it was part of a broader pattern. I found many of my male colleagues were almost infatuated. The Taliban are very visually striking, you know, they often wear kohl on their eyes. They're in very, kind of, irregular uniforms. So they were coming in looking very arresting. And I mean, some women, too, but a lot of the men were taking selfies with the Taliban. They were putting up Instagram pictures in a very – just posting photos of these fighters without any kind of commentary or context or – even worse, sometimes, to me – a horrible context, like one colleague wrote as a caption on his picture of a Taliban fighter, 'Sexy or scary?', which I found an extraordinarily inappropriate response to a movement that were depriving women of their rights to work and to the most basic of education, to high school.

And I do think that things have definitely got better. As Janine mentioned, there are so many more women working as reporters across all fields, including covering conflicts, whether these are conventional wars or the type of wars that you have in places like Mexico, which maybe don't have such a clear front line.

But while we work in an incredibly patriarchal structure where the majority of editors are still men, the gatekeepers are still men … It's not just the reporters on the ground; had there been, for instance, at the New York Times, a female editor running the Afghan file, might she have looked at the coverage, the fact that we had it on our front page, the BBC the next day were running it as their top story, and asked her reporters, 'Why are we not running this story?' And when they did run it four days later, it was buried in a feature story. They didn't even do it. And I'd like to say it's tribute to the news judgment of those of us who did foreground this story that it has become absolutely one of the most salient issues in coverage of Afghanistan and international relations of Afghanistan.

So these issues are important. But I think, you know, there is a problem around visibility, which is, you know as women, we live in a patriarchal world, as women reporters, we operate in a patriarchal system. And I think, you know, of course, leaving aside the questions of danger to women, which are, but women who could be foregrounded, women's issues that could be centred aren't happening partly because of these structures. And I think also this tendency you sometimes get to tokenism like, you know, coverage of female fighters as stereotypical or not taken seriously, you know, the numbers not represented. Like if they do a story about a female fighter, it will be about look at women on the front line, not a story in which a woman being on the front line is incidental to everything else that's going on.

Janine di Giovanni: Emma, you work for a great paper, the *Guardian,* and a paper that's more enlightened. For years I worked for, I think, one of the most sexist organizations in the world, run by Rupert Murdoch, *The Times* of London. And one thing – I don't know if you ever had this – but I was one of the few women at that point on the foreign desk doing war reporting, and because I didn't have a child and I wasn't married, they would send me away, on every holiday, Christmas, Easter, my birthday, for months and months on end. But then when the story would become really big, they'd send in the men and they would all try to bigfoot me on the big stories. So they'd say: 'Oh, Janine, why don't you go to the beauty salons and talk to the women?' And I felt like, what are you talking about? I was the one that was on the front line for three months waiting for these guys to get here. And then – and Emma and I were discussing this earlier – because there are more women working as war reporters or combat reporters or working in Ukraine now, I think there's more space for understanding.

I've told this terrible story of – I finally was going to have a baby and I was pulled into the office by my managing editor, who had been a foreign correspondent and had five children. And he started screaming at me: 'How dare you get pregnant? I have a war reporter who can't go to war.' It was at the height of the Iraq War, and I said, 'There's nothing in my contract that says I can't have a baby.' And I had a baby very late in life. And I just thought it is so extraordinary the double standards that are often put on women during this kind of work, not just journalists, but the UN field workers, aid workers, especially if you're a woman. It's a tough job for anyone, but I just think that there are other things that need to be taken into account. And you just mentioned security. Now, a lot of the journalists have security people working with them, but for years, I was sent with a few hundred dollars, a cell phone and, you know, told to basically hitchhike from the West Bank to Gaza or something. And there was no thought to our own personal security. So I'm happy to see that things have evolved so much and I'm happy there's papers like the *Guardian* that do stories like that. But we've come a long way. And it really was tough when I started and before me, there were people like Martha Gellhorn or Gloria Emerson, who covered the war in Vietnam, who were really treated badly. So it's a good thing that there are more and more women doing this.

Diana Berg: Of course, we are obviously moving. We are a liberal democracy and we are moving very fast, I think, towards victory, and to defeat Russia. And of the cases I remember concerning the sexism of patriarchal tyranny, there was one case when I was happy with [the sexism]. It's when Russians on the checkpoints, during occupation, they don't take women seriously and they don't – or at least they didn't, it was this spring – they didn't search them or check their tattoos. So it was possible for women who serve in the Army to escape. They only checked men because women were so – just objects. So there is just one good point. One privilege.

Lydia Cacho: I would like to address an issue regarding journalism because we're coming to an end. I'm not the moderator, but I'm obsessed with time. But I want to say yes, of course, we've been journalists for more than thirty years, we know everything has changed so much because of our presence there. So it goes to show. And then it goes to show why so many amazing young women, Ukrainian women, are now changing how this democracy is working, how it will work after the war. And I have to say that one of the things I would like to see

is how female journalists and reporters, specifically in Ukraine, are trained to do more investigative reports on personal safety, not only during war, but after the war, and how they are trained and they should be trained right now for the future because you will need it. You will need to have the best internal journalism, not only people coming from abroad, but I know you do have some journalists, but you need more support.

And I think we need to call for that, for more journalists to come and train and help and bring, you know, experiences from all over and share experience.

Diana Berg: Yeah, think long term thing, think ahead. But again, we are just in the middle of war. We have to survive. And sometimes we don't have enough resources to think ahead. While obviously it's very important to think ahead, that's why we need your experience.

Indeed, we are almost running out of time. I had at least one more question or a let it be a comment, if you could react on it. Back to feminist perspectives: Ukrainian feminists sometimes feel that our sisters abroad, European feminists, for example, they don't understand us because we ask for arms, we ask to arm Ukraine, we need it for our victory, while Western feminists sometimes think that war is a patriarchal tool and are more pacifistic. So this kind of 'West-splaining' happens. *[Laughter from the audience]* Sorry, sorry. But that's how we feel, Ukrainian feminists. So it's a different paradigm. It's not systematic, but still, it's my observation. Do you think it's possible to close this gap? Do you think our war, the Ukrainian war, will somehow shift feminist perspective globally?

Janine di Giovanni: I don't think it's actually a feminist thing. I would say – and this is an interesting view – the Global South and Africa – I was really stunned. Right after Bucha, in April, I had to moderate a very high-level UN women's retreat of Under-Secretary-General, so extremely high level. And I was very emotional about Ukraine, and when I arrived I said to someone, I won't say who, that I really want to talk about Ukraine. And she said to me, 'I think you will find most of the people here do not agree with you about Ukraine. They feel that this is a Western, NATO-led war and that it should be left to Ukraine and Putin.' And of course, many of these countries in the Global South or Africa were former – educated in the Soviet Union, and so their alliances were more with Putin. That's, I think, the thing we have to work on more than getting feminists

lined up. I think we really need to extend influence. And also in Italy – in Europe, we've got the UK, we've got France, we've got Germany a little bit, you know, they could do better than what they're doing. America's completely – for once, I am so proud to be American for what the Biden administration is doing.

Diana Berg: Thank you.

Janine di Giovanni: But Africa and the Global South really need to – and I know Zelensky went on a major initiative for it, but – don't you agree? I don't think it's a feminist thing. I think it's more about getting other countries behind and galvanizing to support Ukraine, not just the typical European–US alliance … India, you know. It's really important.

Lydia Cacho: I agree with the broad spectrum that you're raising, [Janine], because it's important. And you're right. But I also understand exactly what you're saying, [Diana]. I mean, this white intellectual, European, sitting-in-their-offices, rich feminism that is not really empathetic with reality on the ground. So, yes, of course, I as a feminist wish that wars as they exist right now would end, finally, one day, because we cannot keep doing this. They cannot keep doing this, destroying the world –conquering again and again and again and trying to destroy societies just because one guy wants to be more powerful, well, a group of guys, we all know that. But then on the other hand, it's a fact that to win a war like this, at this time, you need guns. Ammunition and guns. And if women go there to ask for the guns, they don't go there because they're Miss Universe, they go there because they're soldiers. So I don't see the point of this discussion. I think my fellow feminists in Europe that are just judging this should come here and join the Armed Forces for a week at least. Infiltrate the Armed Forces and then we can have a conversation with them.

Diana Berg: Totally. Thank you for this. And like you said, Janine, we really lack subjectivity. We have to reclaim the subjectivity of Ukraine, just like we have to reclaim subjectivity of women in this war. And I think that will be the positive moment of this war, once we win, is that Ukraine will have more visibility, will be subjectivized, just like women will be more subjectivized.

Can I just thank you all for this beautiful discussion with these brilliant women? You are brilliant. We've run out of time. Thank you so much. Thank you for the support. Thank you, Yaryna and thank you, BookForum. Thank you to the US Agency for International Development and Open Society Foundation. And thank you, British Council and Ukrainian

Institute for making this discussion within the UK–Ukrainian cultural season. Thank you, everyone. Thank you to the audience. *Slava Ukraini!*

Elif Shafak in Conversation with Charlotte Higgins

Charlotte Higgins: It's a pleasure to welcome you all here to this event with the Lviv International Book Forum in a digital partnership with the Hay Festival, supported by USAID, by the Open Society Foundation and as part of the UK–Ukrainian Season of Culture, supported by the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute.

Elif, if I may just introduce her very briefly because we'll want to get on to hearing from her, is the author of twelve novels and several works of non-fiction, including *The Forty Rules of Love*, which was an international bestseller, chosen by the BBC as one of the hundred novels that shaped our world, and *10 minutes 38 seconds in This Strange World*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Her most recent novel, *The Island of Missing Trees,* was published last year to enormous acclaim. Elif, hello. It's lovely to see you. How are you doing?

Elif Shafak: It's wonderful to see you. I'm well, I'm so looking forward to this conversation, together with you.

Charlotte Higgins: Together, except, sadly, far away from each other. I'm just incredibly sad that you're not here with us in this extraordinarily beautiful city of Lviv, on this glorious, sunny day. I've spent the morning walking around this incredible place and watching with admiration, actually, as people get on with their lives in the face of an unimaginable, terrifying set of events happening around them and at the other end of the country. I guess your heart has also been pretty much torn in two by this war in Europe, Elif.

Elif Shafak: Absolutely. And I also believe this is not an assault only against the Ukrainian people, but against democracy, against pluralism, against diversity. And to me, and I'm hoping we will talk about all this, it's very important that we react as citizens of the world, as citizens of humanity. I find it very important that we connect beyond these national borders. And I am also, like you, very

much in awe of the resilience of the Ukrainian people. We were just talking about that a few minutes ago. My heart is there. I wish I could be there, but I'm watching very closely and with a deep sense of solidarity.

Charlotte Higgins: You've talked about this a lot, Elif, your discomfort, I suppose, with nationalism, and discomfort with the national boundaries. I'm just curious as to what you think. What if those national boundaries are forced upon you unavoidably by the fact of having a hugely aggressive neighbour? I mean, this is sort of non-negotiable. It's all very well talking about hands across the borders, but at times of extreme aggression, this is impossible, isn't it? Or is it?

Elif Shafak: I do know what you're saying, and I think we need to pay attention to inequality, to power inequality. The kind of nationalism that is in a dominant position, that's a different type of nationalism to the kind of *feeling* of nationhood that is being oppressed and under attack. I do very much understand that distinction. Ultimately, in a more ideal world that we should never stop dreaming of, I would like to see all of us as citizens of humanity, surpassing this idea of nationalism, but that's another level we're talking about. So, I think we need to very much understand how power inequality operates.

Also, if I may add this – I was thinking about this before our event – some people think that books and culture and literature are just a luxury when there's a war, when there's destruction, when there's so much violence. But I personally think our need for literature, our need for culture, storytelling, is even more urgent, is even deeper at a time like this, in these times of darkness. We need to remain connected. We cannot be numb to each other's pain, to each other's sorrows. So it's so important that we connect with authors in Ukraine, poets, writers, illustrators, editors, artists. I find it very important that this cultural festival, this book festival, is being held at a time like this. There's incredible power and resilience in this very platform, in my opinion.

Charlotte Higgins: I think carrying on and doing this festival is an act of resistance that is extremely important. I wanted to talk to you, Elif, about exile, because, as I'm sure many people watching and in the audience at this event know, you are a Turkish writer by birth, you grew up in Turkey, you taught as a political scientist and your career as an academic in Turkey and in America. And for

many years now you have lived in Britain, in London, pursuing your great art as a novelist. But your decision to leave Turkey, I'd like you to talk about that, because exile – I don't even know if you would frame your absence from Turkey as exile, but maybe you can talk about that a bit. I was thinking about all the people in Ukraine who are living far from home, whether that's internally – a lot of people in this city where we are now have come here from more dangerous parts of the country – and obviously, many, many Ukrainians living next door in Poland and around the world. And what a huge effect that has on a society and that has on individuals. I wondered if you would talk a bit about your experience, Elif, of not living in Turkey and what led to that.

Elif Shafak: I would love to say, first and foremost, I have so much respect for the people who are torn apart. For families in Ukraine who have been torn apart. I have also met a number of Ukrainian refugees, immigrants in the UK, families whose heart is back home. It's incredibly difficult. Emotionally very, very challenging. So I have a lot of respect for that feeling of that fractured existence. When it comes to my personal situation, I think I need to mention that I come from Turkey, which is a country that has been going backwards, first gradually and then with bewildering speed. And Turkey has been declining into ultranationalism, religious fundamentalism and, basically, populist authoritarianism. What little democracy we had, or hopes for democracy we had, have been shattered in Turkey for a long time. And when you are an author in such an environment, everything you say offends the authorities. When you question the past history, if you do not agree with the official history, then immediately you are labelled as a betrayer. If you write about sexuality, if you write about gender inequality, again, you might again offend the authorities.

So, it's very difficult to be a novelist in Turkey because words are heavy, because there's no proper freedom of speech. That's what happens when democracy is shattered – freedom of speech is also shattered. I love Turkey. I feel very attached to the people in Turkey. But the politics is a different thing. Politicians is a different thing. We've had a very macho, ultra-conservative government in power for a very long time, that has become, over the years, more and more authoritarian.

One other thing that I need to add is one of my earlier novels is called *The Bastard of Istanbul*. This is a novel that talks about a Turkish family and an Armenian–American family. In Turkey we do not talk about the Armenian genocide. It's a big taboo and people get very upset, people get very offended when you

talk about this incredibly important tragedy. But I think we need to talk about it. Because in my novel I mentioned the Armenian genocide, I was put on trial. And it's very weird because we have this article in our constitution, which protects Turkishness against insults, but nobody knows what that means. It was also very surreal because the words of fictional characters were taken out of the text, taken out of context, and used as evidence in the courtroom. So I found myself in this very surreal situation in which I was put on trial alongside my Armenian fictional characters, and that went on for over a year. There were ultranationalist groups spitting at my picture on the streets, burning EU flags. I can never forget any of that. And at the end of that year, I was acquitted and the fictional characters were acquitted with me. But you still have to live with a bodyguard afterwards. So it's a very exhausting, distressing time.

After that, I decided to leave Turkey, even though my heart is there with the people. But all I can say is: you really need freedom of speech when you are a novelist. And I must add that freedom of speech is under attack across the world, not only in one country or another, but it made me more alert to the importance of freedom of speech for literature.

Charlotte Higgins: That was back in 2006, I think, the trial. Am I right? *[Elif Shafak nods]* Presumably you were called as a witness. Were you on the witness stand? Were you in the dock? How did it work? Were you speaking in the trial, giving evidence?

Elif Shafak: No, because – this is just a strange coincidence in my life – I was also pregnant at the time. And the day before the trial, I gave birth, actually. So it was a very, very turbulent time, emotionally as well. But I wish I could tell you that, going forward, things have improved in Turkey. I wish I could have told you that at least we have made progress. It's quite the opposite. Nowadays it's even harder, much harder, for writers, for poets, for cartoonists. Humour becomes a dangerous thing – many cartoonists in Turkey have been put on trial. It's by no means me alone. Journalists, writers, editors, translators for translating work of fiction have been put on trial.

I had another case in the last years. This time, another novel of mine, *10 minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World,* and an earlier novel because there was a sex worker in the novel, and again, this offended the feelings of authorities. So, you know, the books are being sent to the prosecutor's office in Turkey, and they

have been investigated. And again, as a writer, you go through all of that. So, it's very surreal and very strange. But I think, again, it made me very aware of the importance of solidarity, of writers showing solidarity to each other, poets connecting across borders. This is a moment of global solidarity and, if I may add this, especially for women. Because what we've seen in countries like Turkey is that whenever a country loses its democracy, whenever a country starts going backwards, the very first rights that will be taken away will be women's rights and minorities' rights. So I really find it important that especially women and minorities become more vocal advocates of democracy. And I find it very important that we remain connected in a feeling of global solidarity and global sisterhood.

Charlotte Higgins: Interesting, then, that the seeds of – maybe it's too optimistic to think of it as a revolution, but the seeds of *something* are really starting in Iran at the moment, and that's coming from women and girls taking off their hijabs in response to the killing of a young woman in prison, an awful event. I know you've been following this uprising of female voices in Iran quite closely. If you think that women can be the canary in the coal mine, which is a very British turn of phrase… If you feel that the diminution of rights for women can be the sign of a fragile democracy or a decay in democracy, I'm just wondering if you feel like the opposite could potentially be true: that the outpouring of voices by women could be the seeds of something optimistic? I don't know. Maybe I'm being too optimistic because these girls and women have very little power in Iran and the government has all the power.

Elif Shafak: These girls and women, they are amazing. And I think we need to extend our solidarity. It's very important that we follow what's happening in Iran, also what's happening in Afghanistan, in different parts of the world where women have been denied their most basic human rights, universal human rights. I really am in awe of their courage. As you mentioned, after the killing of Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish woman, Jina Mahsa Amini, there have been lots of people on the streets, even though it's incredibly dangerous. And these are – this is a young generation. That's the thing. A huge part of the Iranian population is so young, under the age of thirty. This is a completely new generation. They don't want that kind of authoritarianism. They don't want that kind of oppression, and they feel connected with the rest of the world.

I'm a big believer in having a dose of pessimism and a dose of optimism together. Because too much pessimism, of course, weighs us down, then we lose hope. But too much optimism, I don't like that either, because then, you know, why bother? Things will sort themselves out. So maybe a half and half, a conscious optimism and a creative pessimism is, I think, what we need most right now. And of course, it has become one of the most cited quotes from Gramsci in the last years. How interesting that Gramsci's famous saying about the pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will or of the heart is, I think, very much relevant for our times.

Charlotte Higgins: Just going back for a minute to your situation that you described – I know because of your great desire to show solidarity with others, you quickly deflected that away from yourself. But I can't imagine what it must have been like to suddenly go from being a very well-known author in your home country, very loved and selling enormous quantities of books, to have just given birth to your first child and to become a kind of hate figure. How did you find the resilience to overcome what, I'm certain, must have been an extraordinarily traumatic period in your life?

Elif Shafak: You know, sometimes I think being a novelist in Turkey is a bit like being kissed on one cheek while being slapped on the other cheek, and you experience this simultaneously. It's a very strange experience in the sense that, when you connect with the people – and to me this is very important – people who love books, people who love literature, there's something very genuine and deep and loving there. In Turkey, a book is not a personal item – and many of my friends, Indian authors, Pakistani authors, they tell me it's exactly the same for them, too. In Turkey, if a reader likes a book, they don't just put it back on the shelf, they pass it on. They share that novel with their best friend, and the best friend gives it to their mother, and the mother sends it to their neighbour. The same copy can be read by five to six people on average. That kind of word of mouth, that kind of sharing of books is so beautiful, it's so heart-warming, and I can never lose sight of that. But on the other hand, being a novelist in Turkey feels like being slapped on the other cheek constantly because, as I mentioned earlier, whatever you say offends the authorities in a country where there's no proper freedom of speech.

And I would add that for women, it's much harder. The literary world at first glance looks egalitarian, but it is not. It is a very sexist environment. As I'm

getting older, I realize more and more that it will be much harder for younger women. So, if there are any young women out there who are listening to us, who are poets or storytellers or artists or who are aspiring to be so, to become so one day, I respect their struggle so much because there's a lot of sexism and misogyny that women have to face. And I'm afraid it's got worse all across the world. There is a backlash against women's rights and minorities' rights that we need to be aware of.

Charlotte Higgins: You've had a lot of opportunities to reflect on and observe an authoritarian, fake-democratic leader in your home country. And we can see that there is a type, right? There's a type. And there's a playbook for these authoritarian figures – I'm thinking of the inhabitant of the Kremlin, whose name I can't really bear to mention. What is your impression of the tropes and the … What makes these men part of a type? What commonalities do you observe?

Elif Shafak: Yes, there are lots of similar patterns all across the world. There are differences as well that we should also highlight. But I have an issue with this definition of 'strongman' that many people use. Is it really a sign of strength to try to increase authoritarianism, is that really a sign of strength? I think it's quite the opposite. Strength comes from inclusion, from equality, from respect for diversity. Unfortunately, the world we're living in very much venerates or romanticizes a type of masculinity, a macho form of masculinity, that is also attributed to these so-called populist authoritarian leaders. At its core, populism, populist authoritarianism, is and will always be against women's rights, against pluralism. It will also be against inclusion and freedom of speech. It will create a myth of a monolithic sense of people, as if 'the people' is one and only thing and they are the representatives of that voice. Whereas that's not reality. In reality, 'the people' is composed of a whole diversity of colours and voices. But populist authoritarianism will never allow pluralism to be celebrated or multiplicity to be celebrated.

It also comes back to a sense of identity. We all are born into our cultures, into a certain family, into a certain context, and it's wonderful that we feel connected to the culture of our ancestors. But, at the same time, as human beings we have multiple belongings. And that is the one thing that is never being celebrated in today's world. So when I look at myself, for instance, I am, of course, Turkish and I feel very attached to Istanbul. I'm an Istanbulite, if I may put it this way, but I also feel attached to the Balkans. So put me next to a Greek author, or a

Bulgarian, or Romanian author – I have so much in common with them. I also feel attached to the Middle East. Again, put me next to a Jordanian, Lebanese, Egyptian author – I have so much in common with them. At the same time, I am European. I feel attached to the values and the principles that have been upheld in this continent. So I would consider myself European. I have become British, or a Londoner, over the years. And despite what politicians have been telling us in the UK, I want to call myself a citizen of humanity, a citizen of the world.

The reason I share this with you is because it is possible to think of identity as something multiple, like concentric circles in water, expanding. The centre is very important, where we begin, our local attachments. But, at the same time, we have international attachments as well. And this is the kind of thinking that will never be encouraged by populist autocrats, because for them it is always 'us' versus 'them'. They want to create a sense of tribalism, isolationism and artificial divisions, and impose those divisions on their people. That is a very common trait across the world.

Charlotte Higgins: [On the subject of a] lost or mythical past – a kind of false mythification… Trying to reclaim imagined lost pastures tends to be part of the playbook, doesn't it?

Elif Shafak: I'm so glad you mentioned this because it is such a big part of that playbook. We've seen echoes of that in Turkey as well. This rhetoric about a golden age of empire, dreams of a glorious past, creating that kind of myth, that kind of illusion, overromanticizing that … And that toxic nostalgia, that toxic *imperial* nostalgia, is so dangerous. As storytellers, we know that the story of the empire, or the story of the past, changes depending on who is telling the story and who is not allowed to tell the story. For instance, from a Turkish perspective, the story of the Ottoman Empire changes if you ask an Armenian silversmith, or a Jewish miller, or a Kurdish peasant, or a woman, a concubine in the Haram – ask her, 'What was the story of the empire like for you?', and you will get a different answer. The problem is we never hear the voices of minorities. We never hear those silenced voices in the official narrative. The official narrative creates a myth of a golden era, and it starts longing for that golden age, which becomes very aggressive – expansionist almost – as we've seen, of course, so sadly with the case of Russia. I find that toxic nostalgia a very, very dangerous thing.

Charlotte Higgins: And that often goes along with actual suppression of cultural memory, doesn't it? You've talked about this in relation to *The Bastard of Istanbul* and its thematic contact with the Armenian genocide – these parts of history that, in certain cultures, under certain kind of authoritarian narratives and regimes, you cannot touch. So you cannot touch the Armenian genocide. And there are many cultures that have parts of their history they would rather forget, but in some nations and under some regimes, this becomes an extreme – in the sense that Tiananmen Square cannot be mentioned in China and the Cultural Revolution is almost taboo. Indeed, I don't want to talk about Britain –why would we? I am in Lviv – but even in Britain there's a huge debate about how, in what way and who gets to remember the effects of the British Empire and to what extent should we face up to and confront the fact that very violent and terrible things were done in the name of creating that empire. And people are reluctant to do that. There is a corrosive debate around how we should think about and teach the history of empire in our schools. And this is a really crucial debate to have, even though many people don't want to have it at all.

But I'm wondering what you think the effect on a nation of this suppression can be? Because it seems to me that, psychically, if you as an individual suppress and deny terrible events that happened in your own past, that tends to be not a very good thing – or rather, it tends to emerge in ways that you little expected or desired.

Elif Shafak: Absolutely, I fully agree with you. I think memory matters. Not in order to get stuck in the past, but we have a responsibility to remember. Both as individuals and societies, we need to bear in mind that what we do not remember, we cannot repair, and what we do not repair, we are bound to repeat again and again. For an individual to heal, for a community to heal, for a society to heal, memory is important. To be able to remember is important. And it also strengthens a democracy. It does not erode a democracy; just the opposite. It strengthens a society to be able to talk about the past in a nuanced way, in an inclusive way.

In Turkey, of course, we have a very rich history. We have a very complex and long history. But that doesn't mean we have a strong memory, just the opposite. I think Turkey is a country of collective amnesia. At school, we are never taught about history in a nuanced way. It's only one interpretation of history, one reading of history that's being imposed from above. And so our entire relationship with the past is full of ruptures, voids, gaps, and those voids are filled in by ul-

tranationalist interpretations of the past or Islamist interpretations of the past that say, 'We were always great. Whatever our ancestors did was always great.' And then it becomes very difficult to talk about the past in a nuanced way.

I hear what you're saying, and I do agree that every nation state has its own official version of the past. But the difference is that in a democracy, you can walk into a bookstore and you can find books that question the official history, the official narrative. And the authors of those books are not put in jail. The authors of those books are not put on trial. In a place where there's no democracy, all the other voices, all the other memories are suppressed and silenced. So it becomes even more difficult to talk about the past in a more nuanced way. And I'm with you. I think we should be able to talk about both the beauties and the atrocities of the past. This is not going to take anything away from us. It will help us to heal collectively and hopefully never, ever make the same mistakes again. But that kind of awareness has to start with memory. So memory is a responsibility.

Charlotte Higgins: It's the subject of your most recent novel, in a way, is it not? That certain memories can be suppressed or events not discussed, but they will out in the end. *The Island of Missing Trees* starts with the idea of a little girl realizing that there is stuff not really talked about in her family, and she feels the need she has to start digging. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Elif Shafak: I would love to do that. This is a book in which nature plays a very important role. I'm very interested in ecofeminism; I'm very interested as an individual in connecting the inequalities that we're experiencing right now with the destruction of the climate because, in my opinion, they're very much linked. About the novel, *The Island of Missing Trees*. In its essence, it's a love story. It's a story of two lovers from different tribes, from different backgrounds. As many of you might know, Cyprus is such a beautiful island, eastern-Mediterranean, but it's a divided island at the same time, where there are clashing memories. There is a frontier in Cyprus which is guarded by United Nations soldiers. And this frontier basically separates Greek Cypriots from Turkish Cypriots, Christians from Muslims. So it's drawn along both ethnic and religious lines. And it's a very painful thing, of course, for many families to experience that division, and people remember. But it doesn't mean that they can talk about it easily.

I'm very interested in the immigrant experience, and I have observed over the years that different generations deal with the past in different ways. The older generation, the ones who have experienced the biggest traumas, they carry them inside; it doesn't mean that they know how to talk about those traumas. The second generation, usually, in immigrant families, they don't want to talk about the past that much because, understandably, they have to be more future-oriented, they have to find their feet in a new country. So they treat that moment like a *tabula rasa*, a new beginning. But that leaves us with a very interesting observation: in these families – immigrant families or any family that comes from a very complex background – I think it's the third or the fourth generations, the youngest in these families who are asking the biggest questions about their ancestors, about their family history, about what happened to their great-grandparents. So you can meet young people who are carrying old memories, or who are ready to dig into the past. I find that fascinating.

In my novel, I became very interested in this botanical technique – some people might be familiar with it, but not many people are. There's a botanical technique to help fig trees to survive in harsher climates. If the winter is very chilly, you dig a trench in the ground and you bury the fig tree. It stays under the ground for a few weeks and then come next spring, you unbury that fig tree. So this is a novel that is partly narrated by a fig tree that experiences that kind of burial and unburial. And of course, this is also a metaphor in the book for the unburial of the secrets of the past.

If I may very quickly add this: in Cyprus, there's a bi-communal organization called CMP, Committee on Missing Persons, in which Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots work together. I have a lot of respect for these people. They work together; many of them are women, many of them are young people. What they're doing is they're digging the ground to look for, to search for, the bones of people who went missing during the time of civil war, during the time of violence. And the reason they're looking for these mass graves is because they want to give the dead dignity – a proper burial – but also the families a sense of closure. It's a very painful thing to do. And of course, this resonates with people from South America, from Guatemala, from Chile, from Argentina. It resonates with many people from Spain; after the civil war, there were similar efforts in Spain. In Bosnia after the genocide. Most recently in Iraq after the Yazidi genocide. So, what I'm trying to say is: there are young people who are trying to unbury the secrets of the past in order to help their communities to heal. And I have a lot of respect for these young people. And my novel, at its core, it's a love

story, but it also deals with these major themes, about memory, amnesia, how do we heal as communities.

Charlotte Higgins: I love the fig tree in the book. Not least because the fig tree in your book arrives in London along with its emigrant human companion, or owner, who's brought it as a cutting from a fig tree at a taverna in Cyprus, and the fig tree grows in London. I, too, have a fig tree that is a cutting from my brother's tree, that came from my parents' tree. So it's this real sense of continuity through this fig tree, because they are so resilient. And this fig tree has the sweetest fruit, I can tell you. But how did you decide to take the risk – because it is a big risk – of giving your fig tree a voice in your novel alongside the human voices, and finding a way for that fig tree to talk to us, the readers?

Elif Shafak: I appreciate the question because it really was a risk. As a novelist you know that even the idea of making a tree speak might put people off immediately. And if it doesn't work, the whole thing, the whole structure collapses. But what happened was I started hearing the voice of the fig tree inside my mind, day and night, almost in my dreams. And it felt to me so real, so close to my heart, as if she had so much to say. It's a she-tree, it's a female tree, as you said, it's an immigrant tree. A tree that has been brought from Cyprus to the UK as a cutting.

I think as I was writing this novel, I asked myself... I miss Istanbul a lot and when I left Istanbul, I didn't think I was leaving it for good. So when you look back and ask yourself, 'Had I known, what would I have taken with me?' I think I would have taken a cutting. I would have loved to bring a tree with me from Istanbul to London. So all of that, to me, felt very emotionally close, and I decided to follow the voice of the fig tree. And many people, many readers have told me afterwards that they had been a bit biased against this idea of having a speaking fig tree. But then by the time they finished the novel, it was their favourite character in the book. They really, really loved and felt the tree. That means a lot to me.

And I really want to add this: I think trees are remarkable. They are far more sentient than we recognize. And even though there has been a [lot of] literature about trees in the last twenty years, especially, there's still a lot we do not know about them. And they have a lot to teach us. In my book, I have a Greek character called Kostas who feels like we're all part of the same ecosystem, and if you care about human injustice, you should also care about climate injustice. I think

these are very important views, and paying more attention to trees and nature changes us completely. One of the biggest problems that we are experiencing right now is because we have been so disconnected from our own ecosystems, and we've been so arrogant. We think we are the owners of this planet. We think we're superior to all other creatures, but we are not. We need to urgently reconnect, both with each other as fellow human beings, but also with our own ecosystems.

Charlotte Higgins: Did you have to think about making the tree non-human? In the way that... The tree obviously operates on a different timescale from human beings, for a start. So how did you think about actually creating this voice, that is not a human voice, although by the sounds of it, it at least began very instinctively?

Elif Shafak: It did begin very instinctively. And I think there are two different ways of writing a novel. The first path is very cerebral, very rational, very intellectual, in which the novelist wants to know what's going to happen in the next 120 pages, in which the novelist wants to know how the story is going to end – you need to know that right from the very beginning. So it's a bit more like an engineering, a bit more like mathematical structure. I am not belittling this method and I have lot of respect for many novels that, in my opinion, have been written in that way.

However, it's not my path. My path is the second path in which, of course, you do a lot of research, you put a lot of thought into it, there's a lot of cerebral work going on... but there is also room for intuition. There's also room for something much more irrational, maybe mystical, I dare say. You follow these characters without quite knowing where they're going to take you. You allow the story to lead the way. As the writer, you are a little bit drunk. You're not following a linear line. To me, that feels closer to my heart, it feels more genuine. It's a combination of intellectual analytical activity with something much more emotional, much more irrational going on there. And I like that combination.

Charlotte Higgins: *[Inaudible]* your brain, actually, Elif. Because your novels are so brilliantly told in terms of pure story. You know exactly what you're doing with what information to give the reader, what to withhold, what leaves us

wanting more. And it just feels technically incredibly well controlled. But as you say, going hand in hand with this much less worked-through, technically, idea of a story. That seems to me to be a tremendous balance to succeed in. How instinctive – I mean I hope you agree with me that… well, you don't need to agree with me, I'm telling you that the story, your stories, are beautifully done, beautifully made, nothing too much, nothing too little. They run along incredibly beautifully. Is that an instinctual process or is this part of the storytelling when you are being the technician and being the engineer?

Elif Shafak: I think I need to talk a little bit about my own upbringing in order to be able to answer this, because I think it has relevance. We've spoken about this before, you and I. I was raised by a grandmother in Turkey. It was a little bit unusual, my upbringing, in the sense that I did not grow up in a typical Turkish family. My parents got separated when I was very little. My father stayed in France and my mother brought me to Turkey. And thereafter I was raised by two women: my mother and my grandmother. And I think my grandmother had a big impact on me. She was a storyteller. But when I say this, it was mostly oral storytelling. My grandmother was not a well-educated woman because she had been denied a proper education for being a girl. Literally, she had been taken out of school, even though she loved education. So she was a big supporter of women's independence. She was a big supporter of women's education. And thanks to her, my mother had an amazing education. When women support each other, I think the impact of that goes beyond generations.

But the reason I'm mentioning this is because inside my grandmother's house – and this is the woman that took care of me until I was ten years old – inside her house there was so much magic, so many superstitions, irrationality and the different type of storytelling, which is a little bit more cyclical, a little bit more circular. Now, that is part of my formation. But at the same time, I was a reader, I was a big reader from an early age, mostly because I was an only child. I was a lonely child, and I thought life was very boring, so books really became my friends, and the type of books that I was reading were mostly Western literature, European literature, European novels. So in your soul, you start to combine these two different types of storytelling. And I would love my work – to the best of my ability, I would love my work to bridge these worlds. To bring together the oral culture of Anatolia, Levant, the Middle East, the Balkans, with the canon of the European novel, because both speak to me and I think they do blend, they can blend. There's a part of me that wants to, maybe, bridge different cultures because I think they blend inside my mind.

Charlotte Higgins: That's so beautiful, and I think that's a wonderful place for us to draw this conversation to a close as, alas, it must. But I want to thank you so much. It's been an absolute joy and a pleasure. It was rather unexpected for me because I'm the last-minute stand in for a colleague who, sadly, is indisposed, but a great opportunity for me to catch up with you and to hear you talking with such wonderful fluency and incredible insight about your work and the world around us. Thank you so much, Elif.

And I'm also now going to re-thank our sponsors to remind you that this is a digital partnership between the Lviv International Book Forum and the Hay Festival, supported by USAID, by the Open Society Foundation, part of the UK–Ukrainian Season of Culture, supported by the British Council and the Ukrainian Institute. That's housekeeping done. I want to say again to you, Elif, thank you so much for being with us today.

Elif Shafak: I am so grateful. Thank you, thank you.

Elif Shafak (left) and Charlotte Higgins (right)

Art in Times of Conflict

Participants: Emma Graham-Harrison (Chair), Diana Berg, Oleksandr Mykhed, Ostap Slyvynsky
Pre-recorded video message: Artem Polezhaka

Emma Graham-Harrison: Hi everybody, welcome. I'm absolutely thrilled and honoured to be here today with three in-person, incredible Ukrainian artists and writers, and one video message from another brilliant Ukrainian, to talk about something that is particularly important – always of interest and particularly important. Today we're talking about art in conflict. This is a war premised on the destruction, the annihilation, the denial of Ukrainian culture and identity, which makes this conversation particularly important in the context of this war.

But I think there's also so much to talk about in terms of – we have so much art that's made about war, but a lot of it is made either at a distance or when the guns fall silent. Today we're going to talk to artists about what happens to them and to their work when their whole country is plunged overnight into war for survival. Does culture have a role in war? Should it have a role in war? Do artists need to respond to the war or should they be able to make art for its own sake?

Let me introduce our incredible panel. Diana Berg is a Ukrainian artists' rights activist who's personally lived some of the most brutal experiences of this war, not just since the Russian invasion in February, but the eight years of war that preceded it. Twice an IDP [Internally Displaced Person], she's originally from Donetsk and then moved to Mariupol in 2014, where she founded Platform Tu, a centre for promotion of human rights and freedoms through arts and culture. With the logic very special to Russian propaganda, it was denounced as a centre for both Nazis and LGBT campaigners. And after enduring the first weeks of the Mariupol siege, she managed to escape and has since been a civic voice in exile for the city.

Sitting next to me is Oleksandr Mykhed. A writer, translator, literary scholar, curator of art projects and, most recently, a soldier. He's also personally lived some of the most brutal moments of this war, fleeing his home in Hostomel at the start of the invasion, later learning it had been destroyed by Russian shelling. His non-fiction book I Will Mix Your Blood with Coal is an exploration of the Donbas and the Ukrainian East. He's a member of PEN Ukraine.

Diana Berg

And then joining us by video from Georgia, I hope – I don't know if we can see him on the screen – is Ostap Slyvynsky, who's a poet, translator of fiction and scientific literature, a literary critic and essayist. He speaks and translates at least seven languages, and his own work has been translated into sixteen languages. He coordinated the special project 'Literature Against Aggression' in 2016. And since this war began, he has created a Dictionary of War, which is new definitions of everyday objects that reflects how what they mean to Ukrainians has been changed by the war. I think we're going to hear a little bit of that later. And it's a perfect example of how language and art can help people understand what they are living through and also explain it to other people who are lucky enough not to be going through war themselves.

But we are going to start with a video message from Artem Polezhaka, who is a poet from Kharkiv who is now serving on the front line and has said that almost all of his artist friends are participating in the war effort one way or another, whether in the military or as volunteers. So this is literally art on the front line.

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Artem Polezhaka ***[pre-recorded video]:***

it's only because you haven't seen her eyes.

You know what she's like?

When she's laughing – I cry

when she's angry – she looks like a hedgehog …

we like mole crickets bite into the ground here in the fields

God, can we just all survive?

… and she has this tiny gap between front teeth

and I fall into this gulf twenty-four/seven

oh, those hairs on her arms

man, you won't understand

everything she has is sweet, salty, and fresh

everything I have is this everyday trash.

I gave my rifle a name.

don't ask what it is.

When I get back alive

I'll definitely get married.

When I get back.

Okay, there's time for everything

it seems, I'm not afraid anymore

early morning. Go to sleep.

That was our guys.

✳✳✳

Emma Graham-Harrison: It's hard to follow up a poem like that from the front line, but we will try. Oleksandr, you said to me when we were speaking earlier that when this war began, you lost belief in the power of culture. You lost interest in reading and your journey through the last few months as you got accustomed to a new life, as a soldier, was to find a new belief in the power of literature and culture. You do actually have a book coming out soon, a fairy tale about what Ukraine has been living through that refers back to the dark history of original fairy tales. Could you tell us a little bit about that journey as an artist and a creator? How you lost faith, how you found it again, and what you think the role of literature should be and more?

Oleksandr Mykhed: Me and my dad, we worked on a book about famous classical Ukrainian writers over the course of a year, and that was a dialogue of generations, a father-and-son dialogue. We finished the book on Monday, I sent it to the publisher on Tuesday, and the full-scale invasion started on Thursday. Usually a writer would take a pause to recollect new energy and new impressions and just take a break, [but] for me [the new reality] was just a direct continuation of living life through a non-fiction book about classical Ukrainian writers. Because as I went deeper into their biographies, I realized that Ukrainian writers have had the same enemies throughout centuries, and you could understand

their face, their destiny, and their goals at a deeper level through this contemporary Ukrainian reality.

And I realized that all my previous experience was invaluable [invalid]. You could not protect your family from the rifle gun with your poems. You could not hit somebody with the book – well you could probably try to do that, but it won't work with the crazy occupants from Russia. So I [wrote] the manifesto – [with] the manifesto I tried to grab the first scream of the full-scale invasion. I put the [final] dot in this text on Sunday, on the fourth day of full-scale invasion, and the idea of the text was: this is time to call for action. This is time for direct action and not for talking. And the next day, I enrolled in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Then I took a pause. And then I tried to realize what was happening – actually being in barracks and trying to get some training, because I'd never taken a rifle in my hands before, and I've never served in the Armed Forces before. So that was the process. And then for several months I could not watch movies, I could not read, but that [had been] my daily life before that.

On the seventh day of this – this is almost sounding like a biblical story – but on the seventh day, a Russian missile took my past and wife's past in Hostomel because it bombed our townhouse. And throughout that, at a certain moment, the most important literature that we had were the chats in our smartphones with our neighbours – those who stayed under the occupation – and the chat with my parents, who stayed almost for three weeks in Bucha under the Russian occupation. That was the literature, that was the moment and those were the emotions that I wanted to grab.

So at a certain moment, I realized that my trauma – I should find new words to talk about it. And because usually I would talk to my brothers in arms, just in barracks, 'Oh, you know, Bucha is a really nice green city, it has so many parks, it has this café, this was our favourite croissant place, and this was the best place for wine and…' And then I realized that they have different experience than my trauma, and that I should transform it into text. And at this moment, I realized – and I still believe it, and this book forum is approval for this idea – that Ukrainian artists, no matter what media they work with, [their role] is to talk to a foreign audience, to talk to a wider audience abroad. Because to my mind it's really obvious to everybody in Ukraine what's happening: who the enemy is, what the conflict is about, what the genocide happening right now is about. And we should try to find words for our experiences to share that with the outside world. And that was the first point – my motivation to do that.

On the second level, I realized that a lot of my friends – and Ostap too, who started this vocabulary of war – and the other fellow writers: we started writing these non-fiction diaries to be the witnesses. This is the second point that I'd like to mention [in regards to] the function of literature and art, because this is really a primal function of art. This is just to be a witness, and that's it. Because, probably, some much more talented writers of the next generations will take this raw material and make a beautiful novel about it. But being in the centre of this hurricane, you just try to grab the tiniest moments of your grief, the tiniest moments of your scream – just bits of these transformations of the soul. Because when we meet each other, when we haven't seen each other for a long time, we realize that it might be the fourth interaction or the fifth interaction of your inner 'I' that formed through different experiences over four or five months and the events that happened to you. These diaries, this non-fiction literature, are part of your research into your transformations of the inner self.

And the third part is… The really great Ukrainian poet Halyna Kruk gave the opening speech at the Berlin Literature Festival and she said that – and I absolutely support it – she said that this is not the time for experimentation, for literature, for poets, this is a time for direct action. For example, you write a poem that is a prayer. You write a poem that is a lullaby. You write a poem that is a direct curse to your enemy. And this is like you're once again at the beginning of the history of art. You're once again in the cave. And this is some kind of magic that happens, because when you start to believe in the power of words, you try to insult your enemy with these words. And this is just direct stuff that happened in the cave when they tried to kill animals with the first engravings there. And that's what's happening with the art during warfare.

And that happens, for example, with the visual artists, too. You could find their prayer, you could find their lullaby, and for sure the curse for the enemy. And this non-fiction happening – I call it non-fiction, the reality in which we live in, because if it's time about document, you can't have [outtakes], you can't make edits in this. This is just a direct stream that should be grabbed, and videoed like the videographer guys. This is the time for documentary; this is not a time for fiction.

And [to finish my] answer, you mentioned that I wrote a literary text. Yes, I wrote a fairy tale. But this is a non-fiction fairy tale: it is documentary, based on the facts that we know about the occupation of Kiev Oblast, with Bucha, Borodianka, Irpin… And those are the episodes that are took in one reality. And in that particular moment – if not for the first time, but maybe for second time in my life – I realized who my audience is and what I want on an emotional level. Because

I realized that with this fairy tale, as you've said, with the primary function of the fairy tale, it is a dark fairy tale and it is really hard to [read it and be] re-traumatised by it if you are a Ukrainian. Or you could feel that experience of being in those shoes, of being in that skin, if you are a foreigner. But in the end, I would like it to give some hope.

And this is not about the stuff that usually high art would give. This is usually the function of popular art or blockbuster art or something – just being good. But in the framework of a full-scale invasion, you try to give hope. You try to speak about love, about the future, and just being human. And that's what I tried to do with that text.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Thank you so much, that was incredible. We're going to go Ostap now. One of the things that's so extraordinary about how this war is intersecting with culture is that it's reworking the entire cultural landscape in Ukraine. People are literally changing the language they use to live their everyday life. I've also heard people rethinking which artists belong in the Ukrainian cultural tradition, and how they belong. I've heard people talking about decolonizing the historical tradition, which includes artists who may have written in Russian but were fundamentally Ukrainian.

I wondered if you could talk a little bit about that, about how the relationship with your own artistic tradition and how Ukrainians are changing: how you think about your heritage, what you want to read, what language you want to read it in, what music you want to listen to, what visual arts you want to have hanging in museums and taught at schools.

Ostap Slyvynsky: Thank you. It's a very complex question. We are really in the process now – not only Ukrainians, but I think the whole world, at least the parts of our globe which are interested in what is happening in Ukraine. All of us are now re-reading, reinterpreting and rewriting the history of our relations between Russia and Ukraine. It's very important to understand that Ukrainian–Russian relations have never been equal; they have always been the relations between the metropolis and colony. And it's not appropriate and it's not right to put, mechanically, these cultures in one box as is very often being done. Even now, today, the Nobel Prize for Peace, it also in some way illustrates this tendency to put the cultures of Eastern Europe in one box, without a deeper understanding that this mechanical putting these cultures together reproduces …

Without deeper reflection and reconstruction of these relations, it reproduces these traditional colonial relations between Russian culture and the cultures of Russian former colonies. The colonies they want to regain, to restore as their colonies.

So this is very important on very different levels, now that what we are observing in Ukraine is a kind of emancipation – a very active emancipation – of Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian language. On a linguistic level – this linguistic struggle is very important. This change of use of some toponyms, for example, insisting on using 'Ukraine' instead of 'the Ukraine'. This applies to different languages – not [so much] in English, where the situation is not that bad. But there are other languages where this colonial, very asymmetric, situation is somehow fixed at the level of language. This is a task for writers, for translators as well, because translation is a very important sphere of decolonization and bringing the cultures into an equal situation.

I think that one of the illustrations – and maybe not only the illustration, but also the sources of sustaining this and preserving this colonial status of Ukraine – was the problem with mutual translations. Mutual Ukrainian–Russian translations. Because languages and literatures, without a normal and natural mutual translation process, are not and cannot be fully independent and sovereign. It was a very, very small number of Russian novels, Russian literary works, translated into Ukrainian during all the years of Ukrainian independence, and in the Soviet times as well. The situation with Ukrainian translations in Russia was also very bad, and being the translator from Ukrainian in Russia has always been a struggle – insisting on the visible fact that Ukrainian literature exists and it deserves to be translated. We cannot predict what will happen in the next years. Unfortunately, now relations between Russian and Ukrainian cultures are far from normal. What will happen in the sphere of coexistence and relations between these cultures? It's very hard to predict. We'll see. One day, probably, we will have to begin to bring things back to normal.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Thank you very much. I can imagine there would potentially be some disagreement in future – we were talking earlier about Ukraine reclaiming writers like Bulgakov or Gogol as Ukrainian – and that you would see quite a lot of conflict, that there would certainly be people in Russia who might be resistant to those writers being claimed as Ukrainian. But maybe we can talk about that a little bit further.

Diana, I wanted to talk to you about art as resistance. You've talked about how the work you did at your centre, particularly with young people – this is the art centre that Diana ran in Mariupol – helped some of them. They've talked to you about how it helped them during these terrible weeks of the siege. Many of them deported, forcibly deported to Russia. Perhaps you could talk about that – how can art be an act of resistance? How can it help people endure some of the horrors of conflict and war?

Diana Berg: Yes, I was running an art space in Mariupol, it was called – I can't say 'was' yet, I need to keep saying 'is': it's called Platform Tu. We founded it with some other IDPs from Donetsk, because I'm from Donetsk, and I had to relocate from Donetsk in 2014 and I chose Mariupol for – I don't know why. Just to be as close to my hometown as I could, without actually [having] the ability to visit. So, yes, I was living in Mariupol since 2014 until this March. And yes, indeed, I was witnessing arts at war – actually how our topic sounds – arts at war, because we were in the war since 2014, we had this art space and we were fighting, promoting human rights and freedoms, through arts, through local culture, local activities and local initiatives and critical thinking, of course. In an industrial, giant city twenty kilometres from the front line. So I have this experience of running the only, maybe, independent art space in eastern Ukraine, closest to war.

Last year we did, maybe, the most important project in the life of our space. We tried to reach out to the audience that was underrepresented and invisible: youngsters, teenagers, youth from underprivileged groups. And we can all imagine how many of them there are from families of vulnerable groups, let's say. And, actually, workers of these giant metal and steel companies, too. So what I mean is there are [so many] talented kids – by kids, I mean, I don't know, seventeen to twenty years old. So we wanted to… I would say that Mariupol was always a city that was fighting. Mariupol was fighting with volunteers, with protest movements, pro-Ukrainian activities. It was always at war. But working with the arts and culture was something that we… We wanted to look further. We wanted to look a couple of steps ahead because we really wanted to prevent what happened in Donetsk. Because I really think that we did fail in Donetsk with our protests, although we were running these pro-Ukrainian protests, rallies and marches, and pro-Russians were killing us and injured us and so on. Because we didn't know then how asymmetric our powers are.

We wanted Mariupol to not have the same fate, destiny, as Donetsk. So everything we did was trying to – through culture, arts, creative practices, from the very simple to more sophisticated, like art residencies or projects for a DJing school. We wanted to prevent the same thing that happened to Donetsk. It was our major belief that we could do that. And you know that youth, those youngsters, about 300 people, maybe, 300 teenagers that used to come to our space, that used to love it and feel like home. They said that they felt like home more than in their homes, where, for example, their parents are alcoholics or all different kinds of stories. I will not fit in any timing if I keep telling the stories of these kids. They were very talented. We loved them so much. And fast forward to this spring. We lost connection with all of them, because we lost connection with the whole of Mariupol when we escaped – we did break through in March, with my husband, and lost connection.

But in several months we found out that most of those kids who came to our space, they were, most of them, deported to Russia because they lived in these districts, more depressive, far out districts. Then we did our best to bring them – to somehow organize evacuation for them, from Russia to Europe or to safety in Ukraine. And when we spoke to them, finally – most of them are alive and safe now – they all said, 'It was you who made us confident, who empowered us. It was there in your space that we learned that we matter.' With just simple practices like collage arts or, I don't know, exhibitions of their art, which was not always good art, but just – bad art is also art, that's what I believe in. So still, they are artists. They said, all of them, 'It was you guys who made us survive the siege and occupation of Mariupol and empowered us. You made us survivors.' Those were probably the most important words I heard in this war.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Thank you so much. That's an incredibly moving story about the importance of art, not just for professional artists, but art within a broader community and access for everybody. I thought perhaps now we could just go back to Ostap – talking about how art helps people live through war, process what they're experiencing. Perhaps you could just read us a couple of entries from your Dictionary of War. Is that the right translation? Your new dictionary of Ukrainian language at war.

Ostap Slyvynsky: Yes, I agree completely with Oleksandr when he referred to Halyna Kruk, who said that in war time art has a very practical role. It has to support, to help and to be a testimony, to be a tool for empowering memory, for

memorizing things. Because very often the most important is the testimony which is recorded immediately, during the events, not afterwards. Of course, we will not forget what is happening now because it's unforgettable. It will remain in our individual memories and our collective memory for a long time. But we will never tell about it the way we are telling about it now, when it's very fresh. And this was my idea when I began writing the Dictionary of War, when I was volunteering in Lviv in the hardest time, at the end of February and early March, when we became a kind of humanitarian hub for hundreds, thousands of people who were fleeing from the territories under the hard shelling and the territories near the front line.

And it was not my first thing – to record. I was just doing very simple, everyday things, but very necessary ones: providing people with information, providing them with food, some hot drinks. But I understood very quickly that the people also have another very important need, the need to tell stories. And I was, kind of, an anonymous listener to them, someone who was the first person to hear their stories. I could not use any voice recorder or even a notebook to make some notes. I could only remember, later, at home when I was trying to write these stories down. Of course, I could not restore them fully from the beginning to the end. I was recalling only the most powerful moments or the most moving moments of the stories – or the moments which were unusual in each story. Because to be honest, many of these stories were similar because of the similarity of this horrific experience of these forcibly displaced persons.

When I collected some dozen or more of these stories, I began to look for an appropriate form for these stories. I understood that it could be a dictionary, or a vocabulary. Because each of these stories is based on some words, or on some word, which has changed its meaning, [or a] word which became suddenly important, or which is taken from some distant past, and nobody could predict that this word could ever be necessary for us. Language reacts immediately to such dramatic events as war. For example, who could predict that phrases like 'filtration can' could be necessary for us now? That we would ever use them in our lives. That it won't always stay in the history textbooks, but that this word will become part of our everyday life. Or the term 'Gauleiter', which we use to define the heads of the administrations of the occupied territories. This is a word from the Museum of the Second World War. But we use it nevertheless. This is what is really surprising about language during war time. And this is what the Dictionary of War is about.

Emma Graham-Harrison: I wonder if you could read us one or two entries, if you have them to hand? We can come back to you if not.

Ostap Slyvynsky: Yes, sure. The word 'apples'. It's one of the first entries in the English version of the dictionary, because of the letter 'a', and one of the last, or maybe the last one, in the Ukrainian version because of the Ukrainian alphabet. So alpha and omega of the dictionary.

'Apples'. The story is told by Anna from Kyiv: 'That night I fell asleep in the bathtub in a bucket of blankets and pillows. Listening to the most powerful explosions here since the beginning of the war. Long ago, in a past life, I was crazy in love. And we went to a house in the Carpathian Mountains. It was deep in autumn. We fell asleep in an attic, in a bed that was not much more comfortable than the bathtub, and I listened to apples hitting the ground everywhere in the garden. The slamming of the large ripe apples continued at a measured pace throughout the night. I was happy. Now I fall asleep to the explosions. And I hear those apples. I so badly wanted to be those garden apples hitting the ground around us.'

And one more story about the bath. It's interesting how the words repeat in different monologues. And we can see the different meanings they have in different contexts. And it also shows the difference of personal experiences, but that lots of the experience is very similar.

'Bath' is a story [told by] Marina, who came to Lviv from Kharkiv in the first days of full-scale war: 'We did not have a shelter close to us, so the bathroom was our best hope. I never thought that our whole apartment could shrink to the size of the bathroom. When the missiles started flying around us – first, several houses away from ours, and then just two – I gradually stopped tidying up the apartment and wiping the dust. As though giving up on it all. It seemed so pointless to me. And then I told my bathtub, "Let's hope you save me. OK?" When a missile hit our yard, I was in the bathtub. Every single window was blown out together with the frames; the kitchen, the bedroom, the whole floor was covered in glass. I could never have survived anywhere else other than in the bathroom. And guess what? Hot water came in the next day. I don't know why, but it felt like an award for something. No lights, but hot water pouring from the tap. I filled the bathtub with it and lit some candles. I found some aromatic oil somewhere. I felt like the character in 1,001 nights, like Scheherazade. Only I don't count nights any more.'

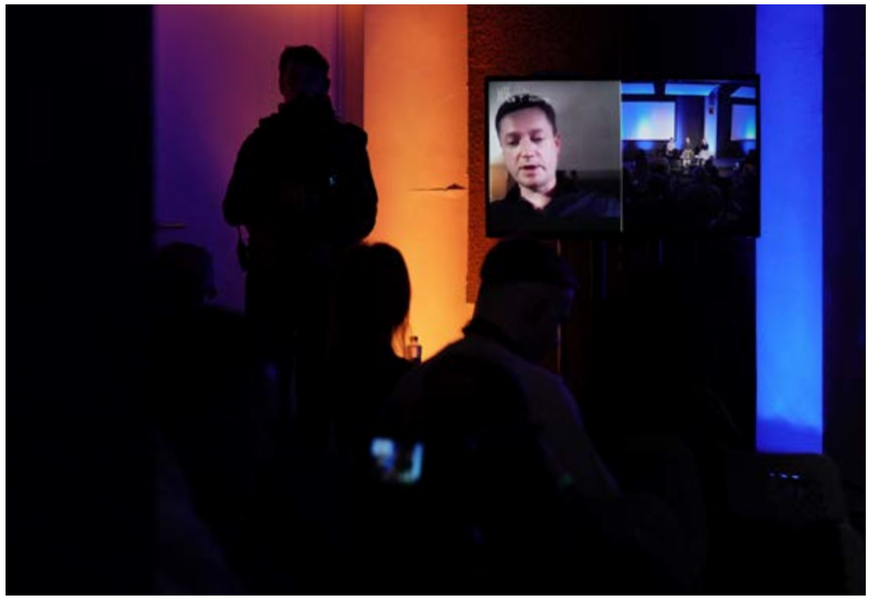
Emma Graham-Harrison: Thank you so much, there's nothing to add. I know Diana has a comment [and] I've got one other quick question for you, Diana. So maybe I'll put that to you and you can wrap up your comment and response.

You were talking about your experiences at Documenta, which made me think of a comment from Andrei Kurkov, who said, 'We need readers now. The world is interested in the word "Ukraine", but is not engaging properly with our culture, with our country.' I think you had an experience that echoed that, so perhaps you could – I know you had a response you wanted to make – and maybe talk a little bit about frustrations of Ukrainian artists at the moment about the global response – and what you'd like to see in terms of interaction with, and support for, Ukrainian culture during this war.

Diana Berg: Yes, thank you. Ostap, I thought about an entry for your dictionary and it will be at the beginning of both the Ukrainian and English [versions], and it's 'art'. On 24 February we had the project of our art residency. And my first thought when I woke up in the morning and Sasha told me, 'Well, it started, the war started,' I was like, 'OK, but what about our residency? Our artists have to come and what then? I mean, should we cancel it or just postpone?' And to this day, we didn't start the art residency, but someone started art shelling. So art now, since 24 of February, means for me the shortage of artillery. You know, so art – when we talk about art, we have to talk about artillery. And that's until the war is over. The best actual conceptual artist in Ukraine is our Army. So far, the best art project made in this war Azovstal, and the defence of Azovstal. And some other brilliant manoeuvres and heroism and examples of heroism of our Army, volunteers, and so on. So that's why some artists, especially musicians, just – they just collapse and cannot do anything, and I totally understand them. So that's my entry about art. For you, Ostap, or for myself.

And about Documenta Fifteen, this year – probably everyone knows about Documenta, it's a once-in-five-years [festival] which started in Kassel after the Second World War as a response to the war. And this year, it was this summer, and it's ended already. Ruangrupa, the curators, they were focused on the Global South and so many really important issues, but nothing about Russia–Ukrainian war, nothing. There were no Ukrainian artists. But there was one Russian artist.

So we somehow we managed to intervene – to make an intervention to Documenta, thanks to our partners at ZK\U Berlin. And they said, 'OK, you can come and do something.' And we were – we couldn't propose any arts. 'We' is



Top (from left to right): Emma Graham-Harrison, Oleksandr Mykhed and Diana Berg
Bottom: Ostap Slyvynsky

our Platform Tu, Kultura medialna from Dnipro, Totem from Kherson – regional grassroots organizations – and Garage from Kharkiv. We didn't do any arts. We couldn't do any arts. It felt so silly to just come and say, 'OK, here is our art of Ukrainian artists.' So we opted to talk, because in the context of all these letters from German intellectuals who wrote to Berliner Zeitung and to other media outlets with letters [urging] Scholz to not give weapons to Ukraine. So we went there to Documenta asking German intellectuals, European intellectuals, to talk to Ukrainians, not about us. Again, a little bit of a 'Westsplaining' and, yes, a colonial approach.

So we did come and talk. Interestingly, on the last day… I cannot say if it was successful or not, but we did talk. We did talk and we had a discussion, three days of programmes – 'Citizenship Ukraine', we called it. And this very interesting small case on the last day: we came to the centre of Kassel. We saw some kind of a protest. And if there is a protest, I must be there. So we came and saw people of third age – elderly people – holding LGBT rainbow flags and big banners saying 'Don't give arms to Ukraine, stop spending our money, blah blah blah.' Like some leftist, strange … I don't know who was there. And we had just come to Kassel from Berlin Pride, and we had this banner: 'Arm Ukraine Now and Make Pride in Mariupol Possible.' So we came back to them and said, 'OK, but, here. Here we are, Ukrainians. Look what we want.' So I think that was perfectly showing an illustration of this kind of dialogue. So we have to talk. Yeah, just like Oleksandr said – we have to address Europeans.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Well, I'm hoping – I don't know quite how it works, but if we have questions from the international audience… There's so much to talk about on this topic. I don't know if anyone here has any questions that they'd like to begin with? *[Oleksandr asks to speak]* Yes, please – I mean I have many more question myself!

Oleksandr Mykhed: Just two remarks. One for your question to Ostap about decolonization. There is a really interesting mark in this dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian literature, and there's stuff mentioned like vice-versa translations, like in the old Soviet tradition, there are these so-called 'fat' magazines – literary magazines that were printed in Moscow. So you would have the in *Inostrannaya Literatura*, which is 'foreign literature', which is a really great magazine where you would read Umberto Eco, Günter Grass, all the famous guys during the Soviet era. And then you would have *Druzhba Narodov,*

which is 'the friendship of nations' or something, which is for Russian writers and some other bad writers from Soviet republics. So usually, after the fall of the Soviet Union, for example, in the 200s, Russian translations of contemporary Ukrainian literature would appear in *Druzhba Narodov*, not in the foreign literature [magazine].

And there was this anecdote that at one literary symposium, Ukrainian writers asked an editor of, *Inostrannaya Literatura,* the foreign literature [magazine]. When would Ukrainian contemporary literature appear in the pages of Foreign Literature? You publish Slovak guys, you publish Czech guys, you publish Polish guys… but when is our time? And the editor answered, 'When you join NATO.' So I guess this is the time for Ukrainian literature not to be in the Friendship of Nations, but to be in Foreign Literature.

Emma Graham-Harrison: I just want to follow up. It's interesting when you're talking about this relationship – your own personal relationship with Russian literature comes originally from someone who loved it very much, right? You did your M.A. in Russian literature, that's your background. But you said when we were speaking earlier that you hope that your profession, your speciality, will be a speciality in decline here in Ukraine.

Oleksandr Mykhed: I would be happy with that.

Emma Graham-Harrison: And as someone who's studied Russian literature, you feel the events of recent years mean there is not a place for it in the way there once was.

Oleksandr Mykhed: I have a great, really bright example. In my loss of faith in the power of literature, I tried different ways of starting to read once more. And that was something like trying to walk on two legs once again in the field that's supposed to be like your natural field – like, this is your space. And so I tried different ways. I tried to read the Bible. I tried to read comic novels, like graphic novels. I tried different things. And at a certain point I thought maybe I should try read the Russian classics: I'll be really angry at them and this will be really emotional, and I will try to do my best, and I'm in barracks and it gives me

some power. And so I took the easiest one: I took Andrei Platonov, who is the stylistic gigantic writer of the Soviet era, and I took his novel that is titled *Chevengur*. And I read two pages and I was shocked, because it starts as this story of the declining Russian village where everything is so bad. It's 1928, 1929, just before the Great Famine and the Holodomor. So it starts with the description of the Russian village where everything is disrupted, everybody's ill, everything is so bad – just like right now. And in the especially severe winters they have one only way to survive: they leave everything in their village and they go to Luhansk, because they would usually find something to eat over there. And that's just a normal way of living in the Russian village – to go to Luhansk because these crazy Ukrainian peasants would usually have something to eat. And usually the kids, the youngest ones, they would just die – and who cares that they die? Their parents will survive in Luhansk. Two pages of Platonov, I said, 'Whoa, I'm not ready for this.' Because this is – again, it works like 100 years, but [this is still how] it works. This is the same kind of mentality. And I couldn't force myself, even as a literary scholar, to try to regain this joy of reading through this painfulness.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Thank you. So, do we have any questions here in the audience? While those of you who might have questions think about them, I am really interested about how current art, particularly literature, fits in this long tradition of fighting against Moscow, whether in the form of Russia or the Soviet Union. I was in Kharkiv in March; I visited – for those Ukrainians in the room, you know what I'm talking about, for non-Ukrainians online and in the room – there's a building in Kharkiv called Slovo House. It's built in the shape of the first letter of the word for 'word' in the Cyrillic alphabet. It's an incredibly sinister building because it was built to gather together the artists, the intellectuals of Kharkiv in the 1920s and 1930s. It was ostensibly a very generous state project. It's this quite beautiful building, built to incredibly high standards for the time, almost luxurious inside. And it was presented to writers as a refuge; somewhere they could come and have good, quality, affordable housing. But the building was laced with equipment for spying on everybody inside it. And of the – I think there's sixty apartments, and I think from that building, thirty-four people were either executed or deported. They were from a generation that came to be known as the 'Executed Renaissance' because they were committed to reviving Ukrainian culture, the idea of Ukrainian cultural identity. And they paid for it very severely. We were shown around Kharkiv by a poet who was doing Instagram readings every night of his poetry.

And I just wondered – he took us to the Literary Museum of Kiev, which had all these portraits of famous literary figures, many of whom have been imprisoned or killed for their defence of Ukrainian literature. You know, going right back to a figure like Taras Shevchenko. I just wondered how much has Ukraine – how much do you feel that what's going on now is part of a longer tradition? And how much do you feel that Ukrainian artists have been bound, in a way, by the need to fight against Russia, against the imperial power, before you can focus on your own creativity and your identity that for so long has had to be an opposition to Russia, or an empire based in Moscow. Ostap, want to jump in? Or anybody here?

Ostap Sylvynsky: Yes, sure. I am absolutely, absolutely sure that what is happening now is the continuation of the same colonial or anti-colonial plots, the same struggle. What I said about the words which we have to take out of some archive or museum because we still need them, we still need to use them. The same concerns the whole relations of Ukrainian and Russian cultures; we still observe that, first, Russian culture and Russian literature is still being used as a tool of political warfare and ideological war. Literature is not innocent. When many defenders of Russian classical or contemporary literature say, 'Please leave literature alone. It is not involved in Putin's war' or 'Please re-read it' or 'It's only being used but misused by Putin personally'. I wish it was like this, but it is not. Unfortunately, a huge part of Russian literature is a part of this imperialistic propaganda machine. It was not written without this ideological intention. [In] some of the authors and some works and some novels or short stories, it's on the surface. And in some of them it lies somewhere deeper. But I think that first Russians – the new generation, maybe, of Russian literary art critics should re-read critically their own heritage. But also, I think that all of us, all the people, all the nations who are feeling now threatened by Russia, Russian propaganda, should re-read this heritage very critically, in a very independent way, to unmask these imperialistic messages which are inside this culture. I tried to convince my colleagues from, for example Foreign Slavistics to do it. I think that it's very important in these communities, departments of Slavistics and Russian studies in the world, and in Western countries in particular, are the appropriate communities which can do it. I think it's very, very, very important for all of us, for the sake of all of us.

Oleksandr Mykhed: One example of what Ostap said: if we took the brightest literary star of Russian contemporary literature, the guy who they call the biggest promise, Zakhar Prilepin – he's just a war criminal. He made a documentary novel about his battalion in Donbas with all the atrocities. And he says that, like, normally on TV shows. And those literary critics who are supposed to be the most famous literary critics in Russia, for example Galina Yuzefovich, she did an interview with him for YouTube, I guess a year and a half ago. And that's OK for her because she tries to claim that in war he's one person, in literature he's someone else. And he did this great novel about Stalinist times – but he's Stalinist himself, in his daily life, in his practice. And now he is just the same Gauleiter as the other guys. And he did that throughout – when the war started, eight years ago. And he's supposed to be – I could not imagine the biggest star of Ukrainian literature to be a war criminal. It doesn't work.

On the other hand, answering your question about this feeling of the continuation of tradition: for example, you mentioned in our pre-talk the issue of how people challenge and choose their language after 24 February. They don't want to write in Russian, they don't want to speak Russian. But if we take the history of Ukrainian literature, the Ukrainian language issue is usually one of the most interesting in the biography of each writer, because there is a certain point when they realize themselves as Ukrainian.

If we take Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, who is our best writer of short stories – he 'found himself' as Ukrainian at thirty-two or thirty-three years old, when he finished his MA in Russian Literature, and he served for four years in Vladivostok as a sailor for the Soviet Army. And if we take, for example, Olena Teliha, who was executed in Babi Yar by Nazis – she, by her birth, was Russian and she figured out that she is a Ukrainian poet in her late twenties, and she died for Ukrainian ideals.

This same goes for Kotsiubynsky, who is our best author of impressionistic short stories. The same with Vasyl Stefanyk, who is from the western part of Ukraine, but he usually had this out in his Ukrainian. Should he write more in the western Ukrainian language, or he should write in the normal, standard way. And then you have Nikolai Gogol, who is the same, because his father, he was a playwright who wrote his plays in Ukrainian and the Ukrainian language was really obituary in the ordinary life for a small Nikolai Gogol. And if we take his first book all the epigraphs in the beginning of the short stories, they are mostly in Ukrainian, and that's a part of his identity. If you translate the original syntax of Gogol into Ukrainian, it sounds more normal in Ukrainian than in Russian.

And this is the stuff that's been happening throughout the centuries. This is not even the part of this discourse [about] the metropolis or colony. This is just regular practice for a lot of Ukrainian writers who discovered themselves. And then if we take the recent history: for the last eight years, we have Volodymyr Rafeyenko who was originally from Donetsk and who got the prizes for his Russian-language novels. Then you have the novel, a really great one that will be published by Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute in English, I guess, next year, and that was published simultaneously in Russian and in Ukrainian. And then he wrote a novel called *Mondegreen* in his way of finding Ukrainian language. And then you have, for example, Olena Stiazhkina, who wrote her most recent novel part in Ukrainian, part in Russian, again, as a way of gaining this instrument of language. And this is just the same stuff that's been happening for 150 years – trying to get identity through language.

Diana Berg: I just wanted to comment that, you know, reclaiming, regaining, reappropriating our identity for us, for Ukrainians, it's not a question. We are doing it, doing it now. We are unlearning Russification. We are decolonizing ourselves right now and we will totally – I'm positive that we are doing it at a good pace now. But the other thing is – the other question is: how will it happen for the whole world? Because Europe, I don't know, let's take the example of Germany – or maybe that's not the best example because of how nostalgic Germans are with Russia, this guilt/fault/shame they feel coming from their history. But OK, let's take any European country. Russia is still a big, powerful culture in the whole narrative and discourse globally. And we need more Russophobia all over the world. And I mean, seriously, we Ukrainians will have to teach people all over the world to be Russophobic.

Oleksandr Mykhed: This is the kind that we can export all over the world.

Diana Berg: We will, yeah. Let's.

Oleksandr Mykhed: Sorry for taking the mic once more, but *[gesturing to Diana Berg]* I was thinking about the Ukrainian armed forces as artists, and I really like that. I'll tell it to my guys – 'You are the artists.' But I think that next year's Nobel Prize for Peace should go to Valerii Federovych Zaluzhnyi and to Volo-

dymyr Oleksandrovych Zelensky, who are the tandem that actually brings the peace. *[Laughter from the audience.]*

Diana Berg: But it's inevitable. Russophobia will be inevitably everywhere if we want to survive. Not only survive, but win, in this war against humanity.

Emma Graham-Harrison: I mean, I have to say – I'm going to be unpopular for saying this, but I do worry about any situation where you have an idea to have collective dislike of any group. That is a path that can lead to – of course, you know, I totally understand why Ukrainians are angry that there is not more voices inside Russia, more protests. But I also – I'm just going to put it out there that – and it's your country and you're under attack. I understand it. But I do think there's a worry about… This war, to a degree, it comes from hatred of Ukrainians and their right to exist. So I do think there's definitely questions about that.

So we've got some questions from the audience. Fantastic. Guys, you waited a bit long. We've only got fifteen minutes, but let's get in there while we've got the fifteen minutes. Let's start over here with this lady.

Audience member: Just briefly, yes, because what you just said was what I was thinking about. It's not my place as a foreigner – I'm from Scotland – to come and say, 'Oh, you shouldn't be talking like that.' And 'That's not going to do you very good at all.' It's not my place. But I get what you're saying. One word that – we're talking about language and how it changes in the time of war, and one word that I heard a lot when I was in Ukraine in April and May and June was 'neliudy'. And I understand why people are like – 'not people'. I understand. This was after Bucha. We have a deep need as human beings to feel like we 'normal people' could never do something like that, and that the people who committed these atrocities are somehow… And I also heard a lot of people saying, 'They are genetically deformed, these Russians. Neliudy. They're not people.' And I'm not saying everyone was saying this, but yes, this language is changing society. It has elements of hatred in it. And I wonder – as language changes to bolster the feelings, it also can go down a darker path for the longer term.

Emma Graham-Harrison: So that's a really interesting question. Maybe we'll just get the other question at the same time and then you can decide which ones you want to address.

Audience member: I'll be brief. I heard the discussion about Nobel, and I just want to ask this question. As you know, today we heard the news about the Nobel Prize and it was divided between the Ukrainian human defenders and Russia's Memorial [organization]. And speaking about culture, and speaking about those caves and war and culture: I understand the position that now culture is a tool of war. But in future, maybe, do you feel it's possible to receive not only the Nobel Prize for Peace, but the Nobel Prize for Literature, for Ukrainian artists writing about war? Or not? Will this idea possibly be the topic for Nobel Prize, not only for Peace, as we [already] got it, but also for Literature? Thank you.

Emma Graham-Harrison: So I'll let you guys jump in if anyone wants to answer those questions. I guess the first one is interesting; language is a tool of war. We certainly see it in Russia, the perversion of language and propaganda. Are you worried about that dark side?

Oleksandr Mykhed: Thanks a lot for that first question about [word]. This is a really tricky one, because on the one hand it is much better to just call them 'Russians'. Not 'orcs' or the other words that we like to use. Those are just Russians. And it really helps, in terms of – as I go deeper into contemporary Russian culture and what they have under the concept of 'Russkiy mir', and what they see as the global Russian world of civilians from different countries, and they consider them as compatriots, they consider them as [word]. This is a huge danger for the whole world. I would not be so radical in what I'm trying to say, but I'm trying to say that other countries, they don't realize the great danger of this happening through the different instruments that this concept of 'Russian world' is spread all over. If you take, for example, Zaldastanov guy, who's with Nochnye Volki, the biker's club, and they have these special marathons on their Western Harley-Davidsons all over Europe, to Berlin, and to gain Berlin – each Victory Day on 9 May they're supposed to manifest themselves. This is considered to be something to do with commemoration, this is considered to be something to do with dialogue of cultures – and, usually, the normal European countries would say, 'That's OK, they have the right to do that.' But they use this

as the political instrument, as propaganda. And that is why I consider this like these atrocities just being made by Russians. Because there are a lot of them, as they say, Russian world, they all are Russians.

Secondly, about the Nobel Prize. This has been a huge discussion for decades: when will we have the Ukrainian Nobel laureate; we have four of them who are almost Nobel laureates, and we really – we know that they deserve it. But I guess this is, again, about our complex. At a certain moment of this war, I realized that we don't need this. We all wanted, for example, a Ukrainian film for the Oscars – and at a certain moment we said 'Nah'. At a certain moment, we wanted to have a Nobel Prize for Literature. And then at a certain moment we said 'Nah'. It will just happen. And it is not a goal that is supposed to be, like, 'We will have the Nobel Prize for Literature in five years.' It doesn't work like that. You have to put some money into translations in different languages. You have to put money in the infrastructure, in the institutions, and support that on long-term projects. And then in ten, five, fifteen years you'll have the Oscars, you will have the Nobel Prize, you will have the Venice Biennale, you have Documenta; you will have everything – the Ukrainian world will appear.

Diana Berg: But first we have to enter NATO, right? *[Laughter from the audience.]* Then we'll have all the Nobel Prizes and we will matter.

Oleksandr Mykhed: This is just a long-term project that we have to work on, on a daily basis. And then that will happen.

Emma Graham-Harrison: We've got one very keen question, so we'll take that and then maybe have final comment.

Audience member: I wanted to ask about buildings and architecture. Just because you were talking about Kharkiv, and I'm not sure how much of the constructivist architecture is intact and what's not. But in terms of rebuilding, do you see a similar division in what you're discussing in literature about sort of reclaiming architectural heritage as actually Ukrainian versus Soviet or Russian, and how the architecture of a rebuilt Ukraine has to express identity? So do you see those similar divides in literature and architecture, and how are those conversations developing?

Diana Berg: I can say a few words about architecture in Mariupol. Our home was hit with a direct missile, to the roof. Our Platform Tu was also hit – in the roof. By Russians. All the city has vanished, because of Russians. Maybe that's all I can say about architecture. That's it. That's my input about architecture.

Oleksandr Mykhed: They have – one of their goals – I still don't believe that they have a strategy, but it happens that they [do] hit cultural heritage. They hit Grigory Skovorada Museum, they hit the art museums, they hit cathedrals, which are under the Moscow Patriarchate, but still they [attacked] these buildings, schools… around 1,000 buildings of important cultural heritage or cultural institutions have been destroyed throughout this. So this is – I'm not sure that I got your question right, but the answer is that everything is part of [a same pattern] that's happening, maybe, accidentally. But I think still they have these attacks on culture as well, on schools, on sports centres, on the Olympic base. You would find it in each sphere, they tried to hit it and you could not separate, like, 'Oh, they hit only culture.' They are trying to destroy everything.

Audience member: I guess I was asking: when you rebuild them, do you have to decolonize the architectural styles in which you rebuild them as well?

Oleksandr Mykhed: Yeah, that's great. Thank you for a great question. That's the [point] Emma mentioned, the 'Executed Renaissance', but it starts to gain new colour if we call it 'Our Twenties' as a term for that period. So if we take Our Twenties as the great renaissance of Ukrainian culture, Constructivists, and if we take that on the basis – and we have this dialogue with the heritage of Ukrainian great artists, it works. And it was actually done in different designs. For example, for the national stand at Frankfurt Book Fair throughout these years, after Maidan, they used some elements of that, and usually you would have that in different fonts, for example, and the dialogue with the artists of 1920s. And if we say like 'Our Twenties'. So you see again this dialogue between the twenties – not the dialogue with the Executed Renaissance, with the almost – the trying-to-survive renaissance. And this works in the different historical circle way.

Emma Graham-Harrison: Did you have anything else you wanted to add just in response to any of those questions? Or we can wrap up if not.

Ostap Slyvynsky: Yes, I will add something briefly, referring to the first question about these non-humans. Yes, I had enough time to think about it. I think that for me is – Of course, it's a very good idea, and I agree totally with Oleksandr's thought that we should leave the naming for them, we should name them just 'Russians'. This should be – they define themselves by their actions. And for me, being outside of humanity means the impossibility to communicate with someone. I have a feeling that I won't be able to communicate with anyone who committed, or who approves, who supports someone who committed such atrocities, like in Bucha or Mariupol. It's impossible. This is from, maybe, a communication and linguistic point of view. For me, this inhumanity means just the impossibility to communicate.

I remember the idea – referring to the arts – of a Spanish artist who wrote to me with a proposal of some kind of artistic action which consisted of recording the messages in Russian language, the messages to Russian occupiers, which had to be recorded and transmitted on the radio waves of the Russian Army, of the Russian Army in Ukraine. So it should be addressed directly to the occupiers. He described this idea; it's interesting as an artistic idea. It's interesting as an idea for some direct action, as well. But I understood – I realized in that moment that I have nothing to say. It was after Bucha and after Hostomel. I understood that I have no words for them. I don't use the words like 'neliudy' or 'non-humans'. This is just not what the type of words I would use. But for me, that inhumanity means the impossibility to communicate. These war criminals placed themselves outside the humanity, outside the space of communication, unfortunately. And that's why Ukraine, on different levels, now refuses any talks, any interrogations with Russia. It's impossible to communicate with them, with the representatives of their elites, of their power, of their regime. What to talk about with them?

And the second thing, a very short thing: I wanted to refer to what Oleksandr said at the end of his of monologue about the Ukrainian world we have to create. I think that we should create, recreate, build, democratic, open, very modern Ukraine in the world, but avoiding at any price creating 'Ukrainian world' as something similar to 'Russian world', which is closed. Russian world is closed just because it's the world in the world. It's not something which can be – with which you can build a dialogue. It can be only imposed. It can be given as a pill, or as some kind of instruction. Or, whatever, some kind of convex, a kind of closed monologue. But we don't need Ukrainian world, no. I understand that this is not what Oleksandr said, but I just thought about it. No, let's avoid Ukrainian world at any price.

Emma Graham-Harrison: I just want to say thank you to this incredible panel, it's been such a fascinating discussion about war, conflict… I wanted to leave this discussion about what place art has in war and in a country – one of the images that has stayed with me is the bombing in Ivankiv of one of the cultural centres you were talking about, which was the Museum of Maria Prymachenko, one of Ukraine's most famous artists. And when it was bombed by Russians, on fire, townspeople in huge numbers rushed to the museum, rushed inside to take those paintings out and saved them. They saved them all. And I think that tells you a lot about how important culture is to people. Or at least to Ukrainians. How much you value your culture, how important it is, even in these times of extremity. And I just thought I'd leave you with that image, which for me was a very striking one, and say thank you again to our incredible panel for a fascinating discussion. I hope everyone's enjoyed it as much as I have.

Yuval Noah Harari and Neil Gaiman in Conversation with Sevgil Musayeva

Sevgil Musayeva: Good evening, and I know it's good morning to you, Neil, because it's early morning in New York right know. My name is Sevgil Musayeva. I'm the Chief Editor of the *Ukrainska Pravda,* and a Ukrainian journalist from Crimea. Today, I think that we will have an absolutely fantastic discussion, because we have two brilliant authors. It's my pleasure, and I think everyone in Ukraine awaits this discussion and awaits these authors.

I want to introduce Yuval Noah Harari, the great historian and bestselling author of a number of books, and Neil Gaiman, who represents himself as an author, screenwriter and storyteller. Of course, we will speak about your work, we'll speak about the future, because we have this connection. And of course, we will speak about, unfortunately, the situation now in Ukraine and the war in Ukraine, because the full-scale war in Ukraine has been going for six months, and every day it takes the lives of people. It destroys destinies of the people. It steals their future. And what I want to start with – I want to start talking about the future. What brings you together is an attempt to explain and imagine the future, and it's about artificial intelligence, it's about technology. And up to now, we have reflected a lot on these prospects, and it has caused fear as well, of course. But we have, now, a feeling [of being returned] to the past, where we had space for censorship or tyranny. And, unfortunately, war.

What do you think about this encounter with the past – and how far the current situation is moving us away from the future that you've described already? Maybe we'll start with you, Yuval.

Yuval Noah Harari: Well, you know, the past has a hold on us. I often think that we are living inside the dreams of dead people: all these kings and leaders and sometimes poets from hundreds of years ago, sometimes thousands of years ago, that send their icy hands from the graves and still control our minds, still control our thoughts and our behaviour. And as a historian, I think that the main point of studying history is not to remember the past, but to be liberated from it. When I look at what's happening in Ukraine, I see, really, millions of people who

are struggling very, very bravely to liberate themselves from the past. And, on the other side, somebody who is trying to drag them back into the past. Putin is fighting this war in the name of all kinds of historical fantasies in his mind. But above all, he really cannot let go of the past. And I think the one thing he fears most about the Ukrainians is that they have a future, that they want a future. They don't want to go back to the past.

Maybe I'll say just one more thing. A lot of people have been asking me also what I think about the future of Russia. Will Russia ever be able to be, say, a democracy? And people say, no, it's impossible because of their history, because of their culture or whatever. I think that Ukraine is the best answer to that. Because the Ukrainians and the Russians have been living under the same dictatorial and tyrannical regimes for a very long time. First under the Tsarist dictatorship, then under the communist totalitarian regime. And Ukrainians made a choice in 1991, and again and again after that, that they want a different future. I think that this is the thing that most frightens Putin and the people around him. If the Ukrainians succeed in building a better future for themselves, then the Russians would want the same thing.

Sevgil Musayeva: Thank you. Neil, what is your opinion? Do you think that it's also like a battle between future and past, as Yuval talked about it?

Neil Gaiman: There's an old English saying that those who cannot learn from history are condemned to repeat it. And you definitely get the feeling right now that, you know, a mere twenty-five years ago, people were talking about the end of history. They were acting as if everything that had happened would happen. We had all learned our lessons, everybody was getting along, the Iron Curtain had fallen and everybody was just going to be friends. We were going to be heading off to a magical *Star Trek* future in which all kinds of people were on the bridge of the Enterprise. And here we are now, in 2022, and we're definitely making a mess of things. Everywhere we look, we're making mess of things.

But people are still good. And people – sometimes they're misguided, occasionally they're evil, sometimes they're scared, sometimes they're trapped. But I do feel like we haven't quite burnt up our options yet. And I think what's happening in Ukraine actually gives hope. When this kind of thing happened before, and the tanks rolled in from Russia, that was it. Countries rolled over. They were taken over. They were assimilated. This is something different; this is a stage of history that we haven't seen before. This is a resistance and a resistance that's working.

Now I hope it can be an inspiration in all the other places that we need to learn from. Things like climate change, things like battling international fascism, extremism. Things like the mess that the long tail and the global village have led us into, where, all of a sudden, extremists all over the place can talk to each other and suddenly become a critical mass of extremists, rather than that one idiot in the village who was well outnumbered by the nice people, and the sensible people, and the sane people. I think we have a way to go. But I don't feel like we've lost all hopes of the future yet. I think we're still progressing towards a future, and the biggest question, I suspect, is whether our grandchildren or our great-grandchildren will have a habitable planet, and whether our great-grandchildren will have food sources and water sources. Because if they don't – if rising sea levels and extreme climate messes things up – then there's going to be more wars. There's going to be more struggles for ever-decreasing supplies.

Yuval Noah Harari: If I may add something, connecting to something you said, Neil. This whole idea of the end of history and its collapse – you know, as a historian, what I find really, really, personally, terrible is this need to re-learn the lessons again and again. It's like you went to school, you had a lesson, you passed the exam. You come back the next day … and it's the same lesson! Haven't you learned anything? And no, we haven't. We've learned something, but apparently not enough. And sometimes I feel, in the name of my profession, the kind of professional failure of the discipline of history that we are apparently – either we are not telling the story well enough if people have to kind of re-learn the same… 'Oh, again fascism? Again war? Haven't we been through this enough times?' Or the other option is that it's not really in our hands as historians. That history is just too important to be left to the historians. So you have all these politicians who are commandeering history and twisting it for their own purposes. But still, as a historian, it's really, really so depressing that we have to go through this again.

Sevgil Musayeva: I want to add something and I want to continue this path. Why do you think humanity needs all these trials? Not only war – Neil mentioned climate change. We can also now start to speak about pandemics, we've already lived one for two years. Neil, you just said that it's a big universe and it's very

Bottom: Neil Gaiman

dark, but at the same time you're thinking about hope. Where is hope here? Because we are faced with a lot of terrible changes. We don't learn lessons. You said it, Yuval. So, what is the purpose of all these events?

Neil Gaiman: First of all, the purpose of anything with people in it is beyond me. I think you can point to the purpose of an individual. You can just about point to the purpose of a group. But when you start talking about countries and politicians and huge populations… They want to survive. They want to get through their day. Most of them would like a roof over their head, and food, and for their children to be safe – and after that it gets a bit mad. But I think that… hope? We have hope. We have hope because the same tools that we are using to mess the world up are the same tools that we use to fix things. And they are our brains. They are our minds. Human beings are – we are fascinating, as a species we're fascinating. One reason why we're fascinating is because we have books, because we have ways of keeping the knowledge of human beings in the past, of keeping their discoveries, of maintaining them and building upon them. We wound up in a place where we can do miracles. If you want to read the fairy tales of 500 years ago – there's nothing that a fabulous magician could do in one of those fairy tales that we can't do now. We can get on our magic carpets – and they may be planes, and you may be sitting there having to eat bad peanuts and squashed in next to somebody who didn't wash – but you're still magically being transported across oceans in tiny amounts of time. The fact that we are talking to each other right now is amazing. It is miraculous. And we must not lose sight of that. We mustn't lose sight.

Yes, climate change is terrible. Yes, if we don't do something, we may be dooming the planet or dooming a significant part of its population. Will we do something? I don't know. Can we do something? Do we actually have the ability? Do we have the knowledge? Yes, we do. We have lots of very sensible people out there who've been saying for thirty, forty years, 'OK, this is what we need to doing order to stop this stuff.'

Yuval Noah Harari: I think both of us, Neil and me, we are fascinated by mythology and by the ability of humans to create completely new realities out of their imagination. But perhaps I'm more sceptical or pessimistic about this ability, especially when people become very powerful and they can realize these myths, these fantasies in their hands – this can become extremely dangerous. It starts with, again, let's go back to the war. One way to understand this war is

that – where did it begin? It began in the fantasies of Putin as a child, hearing all these stories about the Second World War and dreaming about one day also being this great hero who fights the Nazis. And eventually reaching the point that he's casting this fantasy on the world, not realizing that he's also casting himself into the role of the Nazis. But in his imagination – going back to being, I don't know, a kid hearing these stories about the siege of Leningrad – in his imagination, he's recreating these fantasies.

Going from that all the way to new technologies that we are developing, that are enabling us to try and realize our mythologies… I look at all the fascination that many people in Silicon Valley and elsewhere have with the metaverse, and have with transporting ourselves into a virtual reality world. For me, as a historian and as a student of mythology, this goes back thousands of years to the arguments of the early Christians about their theology and their mythology. Because you had one camp that believed that humans are bodies. And even Jesus himself, when he talks about the resurrection, he has in mind a resurrection in the flesh of the body. When he talks about the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God, he means a real kingdom on Earth with, you know, stones and trees and all that. But there was another camp which [said] that the body is not important. There is just an eternal, immaterial soul, that is who we really are.

And hopefully we'll one day be released from this material dirty, smelly, physical body and exist in heaven, in an immaterial realm.

And now we are at a point in history, thousands of years later, when this argument actually becomes a reality. It's not only a fantasy in the mind. When you watch somebody sitting in a room with, maybe, some goggles, or maybe just with the screen, all day. Is he trapped inside this small room? Or is he or she liberated into the immaterial realm of cyberspace, of the metaverse? And this theological battle from 2,000 years ago is now becoming a real battle about what human life would look like in coming generations. And what is the role of our bodies? Are they important in any way? Or is the point to release our mind, our soul, from this? To exist in an immaterial realm.

Sevgil Musayeva: It's an interesting point, and I think that we can also start to speak here about propaganda. You mentioned in the beginning of your speech, Yuval, about the imagination of Putin. I think it exists from propaganda sources, and propaganda is one of the core elements of this war; misinformation has become a challenge to humanity. All this can be about human fantasy, and you talked a little bit about it. And it's interesting because you talked about Putin

and how he created his own imagination about Nazis in his brain. At the same time, we have Neil, here, who has created beautiful worlds. How is it possible that one imagination can destroy such countries as Ukraine, and another imagination can build such beautiful worlds, as Neil does?

Neil Gaiman: I think it's the glory and the tragedy of human beings that we have imaginations and that we can follow our dreams, but also other people's dreams. And there is the terrible side to that. There is the ability of people to just go: 'OK, right, everybody with blue eyes is a bad person.' And suddenly all of the people with blue eyes are being rounded up and put into camps. And on the other hand, there are the things that we get right. I feel like democracy is an incredibly fragile idea: it's manipulable. When it goes wrong, it tends to go wrong because democracy works if you have an informed electorate, but who is doing the informing? How are they informed? Are they being lied to? Can you police this? All of that kind of thing is happening. But you can still inspire people. You can still get the idea across to people that they can be better, that they can do better. And you can give them stories that they then can take and improve with.

I never understand when people start talking about some stories being bad because they're escapism. I'm with C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien when they said the only people who really hate escape are jailers. You need to be able to escape sometimes. If you're in an intolerable situation, here, I will give you a book, I will give you a story that may let you out and away, just for a little while. My cousin Helen died very recently at the age of 104, and she would have been a twenty-two-year-old in the Radomsko ghetto in Poland during the war. The Nazis had imprisoned them all in the ghetto. They had told them that there were to be no books; if you were caught with a book, it would mean a bullet in the head. Terrible things were happening. You'd get people being … Anyway, awful things were happening. But Helen, who was doing a sewing group – she was meant to be teaching sewing and dressmaking to the little girls younger than her in the ghetto, but she was actually teaching them mathematics and languages, and she was determined to teach them what she could. She got hold of a copy of *Gone with the Wind* in Polish translation. And she would stay up late every night reading a chapter or two chapters with her windows blacked out so that she could read the story, and she would hide the book behind the loose brick in the wall and replace the brick. And then when the girls came in, she would tell them the story of what she had read in the previous chapter the night before.

And just for an hour, every day, those girls in the ghettos whose parents had already been taken off, many of them, and sent to the gas chambers, they got to escape. And that facility of the brain, the fact that you can engage the imagination, is a gift that we have. It's something incredibly special. It sets us apart, and it's a responsibility. So as a maker of stories, as a maker of fiction, I feel like my job is always going to be to try and inspire, to try and give better ways, and to try and teach. Even if what I'm doing is just giving you a place to go and dream.

Sevgil Musayeva: What would be your response, as a historian, Yuval?

Yuval Noah Harari: About the propaganda – I think that the world, certainly the West, has so much now to learn from Ukraine, on many levels, but also with that. Because Ukraine has been subject to a very intense propaganda and disinformation campaign in recent years from Russia, more than probably any other country, and when Putin invaded, he expected his propaganda campaign to be so successful that nobody would resist him. And I think even many people in the West, even people in Ukraine, maybe, didn't know, and thought that perhaps part of the population would welcome him. And it failed completely. It completely failed. And when you see the problems we have in other countries, like the USA, with disinformation campaigns, I think we should come and take lessons from the Ukrainians. What did you do that was so successful that the Russian disinformation and propaganda campaign completely – at least from the outside, it looks like it completely failed?

With regard to stories and their power to do good, to do bad – many of the crucial ideas of humanity, they always have two sides. It depends how you tell the story. If you think, for instance, about the story of the nation and nationalism and patriotism: one way to tell it is that patriotism is about hating foreigners and hating minorities and, you know, glorious fights and wars. These are the kind of stories that Putin tells. And then you have the other story – that patriotism is not about hating anybody. It's not a story of hate. It's a story of love. It's a story of how you love a particular group of people in a special way. You care about them. And therefore, for instance, in times of war, you're willing even to risk your life for them, which is the story that now Ukraine is telling the world. But there is no need of war. There is no necessary connection between patriotism and war. Patriotism, ideally, is, again, an ideal of peace. That patriotism is paying your taxes honestly so that other people on the other side of the country could get good education and good health care and a sewage system. I think a well-func-

tioning sewage system is a much better symbol for patriotism than these glorious stories and flag waving and things like that.

Finally, I think that there are special moments in history when you see this battle very, very clearly. These are the moments that afterwards people tell stories about for generations and generations. When I look to the future, I'm convinced that Ukrainians will be telling stories about what has been happening in these few months for many, many generations to come. If you want to get into the story, this is the moment. This is the moment that will be told about. And people like Neil and people like me [will] be writing history books and writing novels and fictional stories and TV shows – and whatever they will be – in the future, again and again, about what happened in these months.

Sevgil Musayeva: I want to think a little bit about imagination and about the future. Maybe, Yuval, we'll imagine you as a historian from the future –what would you tell the future generation about this war? About what happened in Ukraine in 2022? And you, Neil, you are in 2022. Could you try to talk about how events now, in Ukraine, and not only in Ukraine, will affect the future of humanity?

Neil Gaiman: I mean, we don't know. But what we hope, and that's the best you can go for, is… As a writer of fiction, you sit there and you go: 'If only,' and, 'If this goes on,' and 'What if?' And part of my huge 'if only' right now is – if this goes on, Ukraine will defeat Russia. The Russians will have to reconsider Putin, for a start, but also reconsider the system they've got of oligarchies, of extortion. You've got a country that should be a very rich country that keeps being bled dry by people who come in and move the wealth out of the country. And then the country itself fails.

I love the idea that a functioning sewage system is actually telling you more about the state of civilization of a country than whether it has tanks and flags waving. I was reminded of the anthropologist Margaret Mead's comment that the point [at which] you know that civilization is happening is the point where you find skeletons with healed broken legs. Because if you have a skeleton and a healed broken leg, it means other people looked after them. Other people went and got them food. Other people cared for each other. Because if you are out in the wilderness and you're on your own and your leg is broken, you're dead. The only way that bone gets to heal is if other people care. So, for me, everything, in terms of how people view what's happening now is: if Ukraine goes under, then

one more light that should be a light of hope goes out. There is less hope in the world. There is less joy in the world. And our protections against totalitarianism are lessened.

Just as they were lessened by Trump, by the events of 6 January. Just as they were lessened by some of the bizarre things that have been happening in the UK over the last six or seven years, where things that make no sense happen, continue to happen, and the country looks around astonished. But for me one of the great things about Ukraine right now is it didn't go under. The lights didn't – haven't gone out yet. And I hope they never do. I hope those candles keep burning and inspire other candles to burn, and other lights to stay on around the world.

Yuval Noah Harari: Well, for me too – it's impossible to know how future historians will tell the story because it's not over yet. You always have to wait to see what will happen next. I do hope that they will tell the story of this war as a turning point, not just for Ukraine, but for the world as a whole, as a turning point, hopefully for the West. The biggest problem that the West now has is its own internal culture war. It's tearing itself apart over things that… I don't understand. The actual ideological gap is much smaller than in most previous eras, yet the level of animosity and hatred and inability to have a conversation, it's really astounding. And I hope that the war would serve – it's not happening so far, but we can hope – that it would serve as a wakeup call to end the culture war within the West. Because the West is still the most powerful bloc in the world. You think about Russia – the Russian economy is smaller than the Italian economy; in economic terms, it's about the Netherlands and Belgium put together. If the world… if the Western bloc – Europe, the United States – and certainly if it keeps its ties with other democracies around the world, if it doesn't disintegrate, [then] it doesn't need to fear anybody in the world. So I hope we'll see the end of this internal culture war.

I also hope that it will be a turning point for Russia. That the Russians will realize it. As Neil said, it's a very rich country in resources. It's also a very rich country in human resources, very well educated. Yet most people are so poor in terms of the services they get – healthcare, welfare and so forth. I hope they can they can turn this around. I also hope that this war doesn't sow the seeds of future hatred. Often, in history, one war sows the seeds for another. I hope it doesn't happen this time. That, at least on our side, we keep the door open. You can have very little hope for this regime, but for the Russian people, I hope that we can be, again, part of the same group, of the same family of people. That

this is not a war against them. And I'm disturbed when I hear people saying that we need now to boycott Russian culture, for instance, not to read Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, not to hear Tchaikovsky. This is terrible. First of all, it gives Putin ownership of Tolstoy, as if this is his book or this is his author. And secondly, it is sowing seeds of future hatred and future conflict. So, again, we can't do this for the Russians, they have to do it for themselves. To choose differently, to change their future. But we must always keep the door open for that.

Sevgil Musayeva: Actually, that was my next question. It was a question about books and Russian literature, because we're having a big discussion [about this] now in Ukrainian society. Part of society thinks that it's also a part of colonial culture, and the colonial influence of Russia. Because you don't have, for example, monuments of Lord Byron in each city in Ukraine, but you have Pushkin monuments in each city in Ukraine. And it means it's not about culture, it's more about influence, it's about colonial policy. Yuval, you mentioned in an interview with Mikhail Zygar that the last book that you read was in Russian literature. And you, Neil, visited Russia a lot of times, and I know about your, not love, maybe, but respect for Bulgakov, who is actually a Kyiv-born author, but at the same time Russia wants to privatize him as well. And we're having a big discussion about him as well.

My question: what to do when books bring pain to an entire nation? Because it's about Ukrainians now. They feel pain when they… You know, my mum, she left Crimea – occupied Crimea, I am originally from Crimea. And when she left, she moved to Kyiv, she left all her Russian literature books, unfortunately, in her place. Because it was about pain.

Neil Gaiman: I think that has to be something that's up to the individual. And I think, you know, what you were talking about Bulgakov, where it's like, well – who wants to claim a writer? Who gets to claim a writer?

I think there are very few writers of fiction who are writing as representatives of a country. We write as human beings, we write as part of the human race. And if we make things that last and if we make things that matter – whether it's music or whether it's literature, or whether it's great paintings – there's a level on which we have to always be seen as doing that as part of the human race and adding to the culture. Having said that, there are places where I wind up having huge discussions with myself about what do I believe? Where do I go with an

author? I have friends who are Jewish who cannot listen to Wagner. Who just go, 'No, he was just too far over.' I look at someone like Ezra Pound, who on the one hand was an astonishing modernist poet, was huge, and important, and on the other hand, really was a Nazi, an anti-Semite. Appalling. Not a good person. And where do I stand on Ezra Pound? I absolutely appreciate the beauty of the poetry. I absolutely appreciate his part in what happened to poetry over the last 150 years – where it began, where it is now. And Pound plays a huge part in that. And I can also go: 'And he was awful.'

I think that all of that – I don't think we get any free passes. By the same token, I think that if you want to go, 'I will not read this author because they are German, because they are Russian, because they are Irish, because they are American, because they are Korean', you are limiting – you're cutting yourself off from part of humanity. Because artists who create great work – they are doing it as a representative of the human race, rather than as a representative of a political party that exists right now.

Yuval Noah Harari: It's complicated. On the one hand, it's very clear that, very often, imperial and colonial projects – they make use of art, they make use of artists. You put the statue of this author in every city, you force all the students to read their works: this should be resisted, of course. But on the other hand, we shouldn't let them own – just because they say, 'We now own it' – we shouldn't cooperate with it.

There was this famous incident, I don't remember who it was, but somebody who wanted to disparage African culture, and [they] asked rhetorically, 'Who is the Tolstoy of the Africans?' Meaning that no African author is coming even close to the kind of work that Tolstoy created. And I think it was Ralph Wiley, an African-American journalist, who replied in a beautiful way. He didn't fall into the trap of, 'OK, let me make you a list of great African writers and let's have a fight. Who is bigger?' No. His answer was, 'Tolstoy is the Tolstoy of the Africans.' He doesn't belong to the Russians. He doesn't belong to the West. He belongs to all humans. What he writes about – the human emotions, the conflicts – it has relevance to everybody. I mean, he himself was influenced by so many people from other nations, from other cultures.

Going back 2,000 years, you have the – I think it was the playwright Terence who said: 'I'm human and nothing human is foreign to me.' As a human being, all human creation is my legacy. In the same way that, as humans, we inherit even more than just all human creation – we inherit evolution. We inherit our

emotions, love and fear and so forth. They're not invented by any human poet, by any human culture. They come from millions of years of evolution, and they are what makes who we really are deep down. So, I think we should be very, very careful about cataloguing. Because it's not just – why focus on artists? What about games? What about food? OK, so the English invented football, so, I don't want to play football. Chocolate comes from Central America – it's not a Jewish food, I won't eat it. I mean, if I only had to eat what Jews discovered, if I only had to read Jewish books, my life would be very, very poor. I probably wouldn't be able to live at all, because most food wasn't discovered or invented by Jewish people.

So, yes, on the one hand, when a government, and especially an imperialist or colonialist government mobilizes artists and art as part of a colonial project, this should be seen clearly and resisted. But beyond that, I don't think that we should cut the human cake into these pieces and say, 'Only this is mine, and I reject everything else.'

Sevgil Musayeva: I want to continue the discussion of anti-colonial war, because the war in Ukraine is essentially anti-colonial. Do you see a place for a phenomenon like colonialism in future? And what will be the basis for such states, if they would exist in the future?

Yuval Noah Harari: Neil, do you want to go?

Neil Gaiman: You go first on that one. As a historian, I will definitely let you pave the way on that.

Yuval Noah Harari: So there are still many colonial projects in different parts of the world today. But we are also seeing – and I'll say one more thing about it: I hear voices in the West, especially from the extreme left, who say this is an imperialist war of the United States. And I'm absolutely amazed, sometimes, how these people can come up with these things. It's Russian bombs falling on Kyiv and Kharkiv – how can you say it's an imperialist American war? I mean, how twisted. You've forgotten what imperialism meant originally. Originally imperialism – Roman imperialism – the legions come, take over a province, a

city, burn it, kill the people, turn it into a province of Rome. This was the original meaning of imperialism. Then in the twentieth century, as all kinds of thinkers started to elaborate on the meaning of imperialism and say, 'This is also imperialism. And this is also imperialism.' And at some stage they forgot the original meaning of the term. What Putin is trying to do – this is the source. This is the original meaning of imperialism. And if you can't see that – all your talk about imperialism and colonialism, but you just don't understand anything.

On the other hand, yes, imperialism and colonialism can take up new forms. And one particularly dangerous form, which might be the future face of colonialism, is something that we can call data colonialism. Old-fashioned colonialism, like what the Russians are trying to do, is based on sending the soldiers in. Data colonialism is based on taking the data out. You have, now, several corporations and governments harvesting the entire data of the world, and this could be the basis fora new kind of imperialism. Just imagine a situation in, maybe, twenty years, when the entire personal data of every individual in the country, every politician, every journalist, every judge, every military officer, is held by somebody in a different country. Then that country is no longer really independent. It's now a data colony controlled from afar. If you have enough data, you don't need to send in the soldiers.

Control of data also means control of attention, as more and more people get their news from these digital sources. If you're in a country that has to decide what its views are on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and part of the population gets their information, their news, from all kinds of websites that flood them with disinformation, then, again, you don't need to send in the soldiers in order to change the policy of that country. You just need to control people's attention, and it's enough.

Sevgil Musayeva: Neil, do you want to add something?

Neil Gaiman: There's not actually a lot that can add to that. I do feel like we are entering a world in which there is the possibility, perhaps even the probability, that these mega corporations are going to essentially become the new countries. That the roles that have been held by countries and governments over the last 2,000, 3,000 years… You know, the monstrosity that is Facebook, the hugeness that is Amazon. These kinds of companies – Google, which started out with a policy of 'don't do anything evil' and roundabout year seven quiet-

ly dropped 'don't do anything evil' from its list of core precepts. They went, 'Oh yeah, well, actually, people can work out sometimes.' They or their successors may well become the entities that we do wind up bowing down to, that do control our lives in ways that a country cannot. And we may wind up in places where we are simply trying to make sense of a whole new kind of world.

Having said that, I've been fascinated for years by the Russian bot farms. By the idea that one of the things that Russia has been enthusiastically doing for the last decade is starting up… People whose job it is basically to have arguments online, and not even necessarily on one side or the other. I was talking to somebody from Cambridge University whose job was analysing where the bot arguments were. And they mentioned some of the arguments online about trans people – and you got the Russian bot farms coming in enthusiastically on both sides. What they wanted to see was people arguing. What they wanted to see was people radicalizing, and splitting, and taking things that maybe they hadn't had real opinions on or cared about, and suddenly fragmenting and going off into their separate corners. About that and about so many other things.

In the same way that in *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift you wound up with two political factions based around whether or not you opened your boiled egg from the big end or the little end, and they became the political groups and they hated each other. And just the idea that you can take a tiny difference of opinion and magnify it into something that allows a wall to come tumbling down and for you to move in and take over and control the discussion. If you're controlling the discussion, you're controlling what's going on inside people's heads. The fact that Ukraine is still out there resisting and winning proves that actually this is not as entirely successful a strategy as, perhaps, the Russians thought.

Sevgil Musayeva: I want to ask one last question. You both mentioned the end of history and the famous book by Francis Fukuyama. And, actually, today I read his last column about Ukraine and he mentioned that he feels a lot of inspiration about what's going on. I will ask only one simple question: Will these events inspire you for your future books? How do you see it? Will they affect your future books? And do you have plans for future books from this situation?

Neil Gaiman: As a writer of fiction, my job right now is to teach and inspire people, and to change minds and win hearts in ways that are never didactic and are always pleasant. From that point of view, I very much feel like the entire state

of the world, both positive and negative, both Ukraine, climate change, the rise of American fascism, the mess that the UK has got itself into – everything is grist to the mill. Everything is part of what I'm going to have to accept and hold onto. But I'm also – I know myself well enough to know that the ways that it may come out might be talking about … a short story about the rocks and the stones of Scotland 12,000 years ago, and the first people to arrive there heading west from Germany and what they saw. Because that's how fiction works for me. It's a process of acknowledging things, accepting things. And what you get out on the other side is never predictable.

Yuval Noah Harari: The events [have] emphasized for me the importance of teaching history, and the importance of teaching history in the right way, in a correct way – because of the way that the war has been justified from the very beginning, and still now, by false historical narratives. It's like somebody is coming and stealing my property, or my hobby, or my profession, and is using it in a terrible, terrible way. And the need to reclaim it. It's very, very difficult because, as I said, history is too important to be left to the historians. The politicians always try to reclaim it and twist it for their purposes, but it means that historians need to redouble their efforts to do better research, write better history, and in particular to reach as wide an audience as possible. It's not enough if we teach professional history to a limited circle of students in university, or if we write articles and books that a limited circle of other professors or history buffs read. We need, in this sense, to also collaborate with people like Neil, and learn how to tell history in a way that would reach many more people. And would thereby serve as a kind of shield, as a kind of wall, against the misappropriation of history by politicians for criminal purposes. I think that this is the main lesson that I'm taking from it, in my writing. I hope that other historians will also make this effort, because—

Sevgil Musayeva: I hope Ukrainian historians will hear you, too.

Yuval Noah Harari: Yes, but historians all over the world. And, as I said at the very beginning, the main purpose for me of writing history is not to remember the past. It's not to remember all of those kings and battles and events centuries ago, or even a few years ago. That's not important. What is important is to liberate ourselves from the past – in the sense that we understand that we al-

ways have more options. The history of a certain country – it influences it, of course, but it doesn't determine a single future. We always have more options than we think. I think this is the most important lesson of history.

Sevgil Musayeva: And we also know that future always defeats the past, so we know exactly who will win this war. Thank you for this incredible conversation. Thank you for your time. I'm really proud that you are guests at this Lviv International Book Festival. It's important for all Ukrainians, and I think not only Ukrainians, for all free people, and for people who love books, who love reading. Thank you so much for your time.

The Idea of Europe

Participants: Misha Glenny (Chair), Tetyana Oharkova, Philippe Sands, Volodymyr Yermolenko
Pre-recorded video message: Pavlo Kazarin

Misha Glenny: Hello and welcome to this session at the Lviv Book Forum on Saturday morning. Let me introduce myself. My name is Misha Glenny. I am Director of the Institute for Human Sciences, the *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen,* in Vienna. The IWM is a co-sponsor of this panel, in part because we have one of the largest academic research programs on Ukraine, in Europe, outside of Ukraine itself, called 'Ukraine in European Dialogue'. In addition, since the invasion of February this year, we have started up a programme called 'Documenting Ukraine', in which we issue grants to Ukrainian writers, artists, intellectuals, filmmakers, journalists – to assist them in the recording of the testimony of what is happening in Ukraine at the moment. For that reason, I have come here with one of the so-called permanent fellows at the IWM, Kate Younger, who's here in the audience. Kate is not only a brilliant Ukrainian speaker, but of several other Slav languages as well, and she heads our Ukraine programmes and she's a very valuable person to know in general.

We are here for a panel called 'The Idea of Europe', which of course is a complex and in some respects a vague title, but it enables us to address a series of different issues of relevance to what is going on in this country and indeed outside of this country. For that, we've got a very distinguished panel whose bios I will read out quickly.

Volodymyr Yermolenko – I'm afraid my struggle with the stress of the Ukrainian language remains a struggle, so if I get the pronunciation wrong, please forgive me. Volodymyr is an Ukrainian philosopher, a journalist and a writer, Doctor of Political Studies from France, a Doctorate in Philosophy from here in Ukraine, Analytics Director at Internews-Ukraine, Associate Professor of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, winner of the Myroslav Popovych Prize 2021, the Petro Mohyla Prize 2021, the Yuri Shevelyov Prize 2018, Book of the Year Prize in Ukraine in 2018 and 2015. So, obviously, sensationally competent. Co-founder and author of the podcast *Kult Podcast* and *Explaining Ukraine*, which is in English for the English speakers here, and he's been published widely in Western publications.

Then we have Oharkova, who is a Ukrainian literary critic, a Doctor of Philosophy in Literary Studies, and specialist in the field of literary theory in the history

of French literature. In 2020, together with Volodymyr (who she's married to, I have to say this now) started *Kult*, the podcast I've already mentioned, which is dedicated to defining epochs in the history of culture and cult authors who've had significant development on literature and culture.

Finally, to my left is Philippe Sands, who, if you come from the United Kingdom or France or indeed many other countries, including Ukraine, is a very well-known character. He is a British–French practising barrister at Matrix Chambers and a Professor of Law at UCL, University College London. He is also the author, incidentally, of *East West Street*, in which Lviv features centrally, and if you haven't read it, that's the first thing you should go and do once we've finished this panel. He appears before the International Criminal Court, the ICC, and the International Court of Justice. *East West Street* has won the Baillie Gifford Prize, which is the biggest non-fiction prize in the United Kingdom. So many congratulations for that.

Before we go on to the substance of our discussion, we're going to hear from the Ukrainian journalist, publicist and philologist Pavlo Kazarin, who published an award-winning book in 2021, *The Wild West of Eastern Europe*. Pavlo is on the front line, fighting, defending Ukraine at the moment with the territorial defence forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, so he cannot be with us. He's on the eastern front, but he has very kindly recorded a video for us to watch, which we're going to watch in advance of the discussion.

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Pavlo Kazarin ***[pre-recorded video]:*** Hello, my name is Pavlo Kazarin. I have worked in the journalism sphere for eighteen years, but for the last seven months I have been a soldier in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In 2014, when the Russian Army was seizing Crimea, it seemed to me that there was a lack of understanding that one just needs to dot the i. I was then writing texts and joining broadcasts. But in 2022, on the second day of the full-scale war, I joined the Army. This time everything is crystal clear. If something needs to be explained to someone, then, there is no need to explain.

Our Army suddenly turned out to be the most 'people' Army imaginable. Only we have a circus mime and a school teacher with deer eyes standing at the same checkpoint. Only we have a machine-gunner dad and a sniper daughter serving in the same unit. Only in our country a mother takes up a weapon to revenge her son, who died at the front. By the way, there are two gay men serving in our

battalion, we stood in the same line with them at the military commissariat. The former disputes are gone, they no longer mean anything. I joined the Army voluntarily because some questions cannot be answered with words; one can only do this with deeds. For example, answer to the question: 'Are you a patriot?'

However, this war can force us to give answers to very different questions. And not only about our personal patriotism. Because this war directly concerns values – those values on which the modern civilized world was built. We are now answering the question: 'Can war be a tool of politics?' 'Can borders be changed with the help of weapons and violence?' If Russia gets its way, it will mean that everything is allowed. We are now defining what Europe is. Is it geography? Is it the standard of living? Or is this a democracy capable of remembering the lessons of history and drawing conclusions from them?

Seven months ago, history once again presented each of us with a choice. And it will no longer be possible to put an equals sign between truth and lies, between those who want to kill and those who defend themselves from the killer. The future of the whole world depends on the fate of my country. The finale of our war will determine the contours of our future. Contours of what we consider good and what we consider evil. I don't want the world to unlearn how to distinguish one from the other. That is why I am now wearing a uniform, as are hundreds of thousands of my fellow citizens. As I have already mentioned, some questions cannot be answered with words. One can only do this with deeds. This is our answer.

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Misha Glenny: Well, that's a very powerful start to our session. Tetyana, I'd like to start with you. Pavlo posed the question of what is Europe, and gave three possible answers. How would you answer that question in terms of Ukraine's experience and what Ukraine contributes to Europe?

Tetyana Oharkova: Yes, thank you very much for this question. And I would agree that Pavlo's speech was extremely powerful, in terms of his action, which has already lasted seven months. His question was whether Europe is geography, whether it's a political entity, or values. We followed closely the story of Ukraine and Europe, starting from the Euromaidan times, 2013 and 2014. We were there at Maidan, and I personally started working at the Ukraine Crisis Media Center

at the time. We were trying to communicate what was going on here in Ukraine, abroad, specifically in France, but also in English and in German language. And I do remember a lot of difficulties explaining, back then in 2013 and 2014, what Euromaidan was about and what this fight was about. That it was not only about the annexation, the illegal annexation of the Crimea; and the aim of the Russian Federation was not only to control Horlivka or Donetsk or any tiny village in eastern Ukraine. It was a huge challenge to the European continent, to European security, and to the European idea and values. I do remember a lot of problems explaining that back then – in 2014, and then in 2015 and 2016 – because a lot of Europeans we talked with at that time considered this conflict to be a local one. And, at the time, part of Ukrainians also considered it to be a local conflict – it was not damaging the life of people in Kyiv, or in Lviv, or in Ternopil. It was a local conflict somewhere over there, in the east.

But with time, in 2022, there is nobody in Ukraine who doesn't understand what the conflict and what the war is about. And we also feel that our European friends, European partners, and Europeans in general – they've started to understand what the war is about. It's not about the control of the Zaporiyia region or the Kherson region or Crimea or Donetsk or Lugansk, which are illegally annexed in recent weeks by Vladimir Putin. This is about rules and this is about values. This is about the right of a country to aggress another country, to annex territories, to kill people thousands of people – thousands Ukrainians have been killed now. But also about the right to do so. And it's also about impunity – an important subject, maybe we'll be discussing it later. Russia tries to show that there could be impunity for one country in aggressing other countries. And Europe, the idea of Europe.

The biggest challenge now is to answer the question of whether we are, together, strong enough to stop this right to impunity of one country. This is about values. This is about ideas. But as Pavlo said, this is also about actions. This is also about our capacity to stand with Ukraine and around Ukraine and to stand in this idea of defending the right to live. I would not say that Europe is only about standards of living, but the right to live freely in your own country and the right to defend your land against this impunity. And I would say – I'll be finishing here, we'll maybe discuss it to make it more vivid – I would say that the main idea, the main challenge for Europe now is to show that we are strong enough. We are not afraid of this aggression. We are not afraid of even these dramatic nuclear threats. And we can stand together to face this danger and to win this war.

Misha Glenny: Thank you, Tetyana. Volodymyr, responding to that: how do you think the rest of Europe has perceived what is going on? Do you think, as Tetyana hopes, that Europe understands what is happening in Ukraine, as an attack on other European countries as well, and that it has an obligation to Ukraine as a consequence? Do you think that that is a process that is happening elsewhere in Europe?

Volodymyr Yermolenko: I think that a European idea is based upon two ethical systems. I would call it the ethics of 'agora' and the ethics of 'agon'. These are two ancient Greek concepts. Agora is a marketplace where you exchange; the main idea is to exchange, not only goods, but everything. So, this is a place for compromise. Agon is a place where you fight. And agon is a place where you either win or lose. And I think the sound society is based upon the combination of the two. A society should be based upon the idea that we should seek compromise as much as possible. But we understand that there is a red line, [beyond] which compromise is not possible. Because every compromise is an exchange. And you cannot exchange human life, for example. I would also call it – agora is a bourgeois ethos, and agon is a warrior ethos, or knightly ethos, whatever you might call it. And after the Second World War, understandably, Europe was thinking that the time of agon was gone. And therefore we should rather build this space of infinite dialogue. The major philosopher who described it is Jürgen Habermas in Germany. And I think that the idea is fantastic – that you can have an infinite dialogue – but there's something in it which is wrong. Because, again, if you push this bourgeois ethos, if you absolutize it, then you're saying that everything is exchangeable. We can reach compromise on everything. For example, you can exchange human life for something else. You can sell human life. And, for example, you can talk with Putin, or you can talk with Hitler, or you can talk with some other monsters.

I think that Ukraine is now showing that when Europe was trying to build its idea upon only this bourgeois ethos, or exchange ethos, or positive-sum-game ethos – whatever you call it – it was wrong. Because you cannot build a sound society on only one pillar. You should have both. If you build a society upon another pillar, the agon ethos, the warrior ethos, you will also have big trouble. Because then you have a society of war, of all against all, when every opponent is considered an enemy. This is also a danger in Ukrainian society right now, because the spirit of war is really going very deep inside – in our society. That's another thing.

I think Russia is precisely the [type of] society which doesn't really think in horizontal terms. It only thinks in terms of vertical relations, power relations. That's another extreme. Europe went to the other extreme, where it thought that these times of agon are in the past. We just [channel] them into football matches and that's it. In this sense, I think it's very, very difficult for Western Europeans to acknowledge that, especially, as I said, for example, in these societies who actually built their very idea on them. Like in Germany – the basic idea is how to avoid evil. Not how to confront evil, but how to avoid evil.

Tetyana, she's very modest, but she has a fantastic notion of how to describe Russia: crime without punishment and punishment without the crime. And this breaking the link – I always quote her, and we have a podcast on this … This link actually breaks justice – and I think Philippe will tell us more about this. But one thing we should understand is that – for example, I admire Philippe's book, *East West Street*, where he shows how Europeans were thinking how to invent rules which would limit violence. These, I think, were the major things behind [the lawyers] Lauterpacht and Lemkin and [others]. Russians are thinking a different way. Russians are thinking how to break the rules, how to use violence to break the rules, how to make violence transform the rules or break the rules or make the rules upside down, not vice versa. And I think we should just understand that as well.

Misha Glenny: So, Philippe, the question goes to you. As outlined by Volodymyr just there – how is the rest of Europe going to break out, if that's what it is, of this culture of avoidance of evil?

Philippe Sands: Firstly, it's incredibly nice to be here with you and on this panel, Misha and Tetyana and Volodymyr. And of course, to be back in Lviv, a city I've come to know very well, and which I'm so very happy to be back at, with the support of this Book Forum and the Hay Festival and the British Council and others. It's really good to be here.

So this question of what is Europe is actually, I think, pretty complicated. It's complicated at a personal level. I keep asking myself, as we all do, who am I? And how do we self-identify? I have two passports: a British passport, a French passport. But I don't feel so British or French. I feel, in a sense, more European. But am I still European as a British national? Is Britain still part of Europe? These questions become increasingly complex.

It's interesting, as Volodymyr talked about different categories of countries and of people, I have to say – this is in an open spirit, we're here to talk openly – I'm really uncomfortable with the idea of putting labels on groups of people or places, and [the idea that] these ones are for justice and the rule of law, and these ones are against justice and the rule of law. That's not my conception, for example, of Russia. In my world, as an international lawyer, certain Russian individuals originated the idea of an international rule of law. If you look at the history of modern international law, it was Russia that pushed, in 1899, for the Hague Conference that created the Permanent Court of Arbitration, that created the International Court of Justice. It was Martens, a famous Russian jurist, who created the idea that in times of war, the means of warfare are not unlimited. His famous Martens Clause – that, ultimately, you have to protect the individual human was an idea propagated by an individual who happened to be a Russian.

So I have to say from the outset that I reject the idea that Russia is against rules. This current leadership of Russia. Absolutely. But my translator of East West Street into Russian – who went to Pushkin Square a few days after the war began and was arrested because she held up a poem written by Nikolai Nekrasov, based on Leo Tolstoy's *Sebastopol Sketches*, which became, of course, the basis for *War and Peace* and the horrors of war, which so many of us in the past have read – she is not someone who's against values that I care about. And I think in this moment we need, in a sense, to step back and avoid the easy path of somehow creating a world in which there is good and there is evil, and those people are on the evil side, these people are on the good side.

I do a lot of work in Africa and in South America and in Asia. And I can tell you that in those parts of the world, as Misha knows also very well, perceptions of what Western Europe has done are not very positive, frankly speaking. Europe, Western Europe is the place of slavery. Western Europe is the place of colonialism and oppression and concentration camps and mass murder and various and many other horrors. So I think in this terrible moment where we are here in solidarity with Ukraine, I'm here in solidarity with Ukraine, with you, with my friends in Lviv, and I stand against this Russian aggression – I think we have to avoid falling into the easy trap of putting labels on groups of human beings and categorizing them as good or bad. And look at things a little bit differently. Europe has elements that are incredibly positive. But Europe also has elements that have been incredibly harmful and destructive. And if we were sitting not here in Lviv, but if we were sitting in Accra or in Mauritius and talking about the Chagos Archipelago or sitting in South Africa or sitting in Windhoek, the capital

of Namibia, former South West Africa, talking about Europe and Europe's responsibilities, frankly, we'd be having a really different perspective.

And if you go around the world today, here is the challenge. I'm not saying that this is my view or that I support it, but we've got to be aware of it. People in the countries that I've just mentioned will say, 'Yes, but when all of this was going on in the 1930s and 1940s, who stood up against British, French, German, Belgian colonialism? It was people who happen to come from a place that today we call Russia. This simply to say it's complex. That doesn't in any way justify what is happening right now. But let's avoid the easy path of putting labels on places and on people, and from those labels drawing conclusions.

[Volodymyr Yermolenko gestures to speak]

Misha Glenny: You will absolutely be able to respond. But this does hit upon a really interesting and important point about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Even if you look at the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was a very, very destructive act over many years, I still cannot think of a conflict which has implications not just for Europe, but the entire global system. And this is one of the difficulties that Europeans have in trying to understand what is going on. Because if you're in Germany or if you're in the United Kingdom, the debate is, what about our energy? What about inflation and all the damage that this war has caused to us? If you speak to people in Egypt or Brazil, it is having a huge impact on Egypt and Brazil. But Russia has, interestingly, focused its propaganda campaigns much less on Europe and much more on Africa, South America and Asia. And I regret to say that in many parts of the world, it is doing so quite successfully.

So, I want to hear your comeback to what Philippe said, but has Europe – I'm not talking about Ukraine here, I'm talking about other European countries… Have other European countries understood that what is happening here is actually, in some senses, a global conflict, not just a Ukrainian conflict, not just a European conflict, not just a Russian invasion, but a global event with huge implications? Tetyana, you go first and then Volodymyr. And you can address any of those.

Tetyana Oharkova: So a quick reaction to what Philippe said. Yes, indeed we are aware of this: it is useless to use labels on people, and this rhetoric is, unfortunately, widely used by Russian propaganda as well, when they say that most of the people in the world are on our side, mentioning non-European countries which are… But let's see the difference: when you, European, half-British, half-French, with both passports, you are talking about atrocities in the past, you are talking about colonialism, you are talking about all these things which happened in the past and you recognize your part of the responsibility, even if you, personally – nobody in your family is responsible for what happened before, in previous centuries. And I would say – and I am coming back to this crime and punishment, this impunity which we observe in Russia.

In Russian history, there were quite a few people who recognized what was going on during even the recent history. I'm talking about totalitarianism in the twentieth century, about Stalinism and, maybe, a huge part of what is going on now is the direct result of the non-recognition of the crimes of the Communist regime and the incapacity to acknowledge and to make the fault theirs. And this is a huge blind spot, and it's what they call, this book, *La tyrannie de la penitence* by Pascal Bruckner, a famous French author. We read his book with big interest, about the European idea of recognizing somebody is guilty for the past in order not to make the same mistakes, the same crimes now. And this is a European idea that we can acknowledge all that, we are responsible for that. And the Russian position which consists to say that we were *always* right. But when we see what Putin does, with the Soviet legacy, with Stalin's legacy, with tsarist legacy – he's not, this regime is not recognizing any kind of fault. And I would say that the majority of – unfortunately – and this is another question for Ukrainians, because Ukrainians also have, they still have this problem, and it's not a coincidence that after the Euromaidan times, there was a huge public discussion about de-Communisation; about this idea to acknowledge a number of Ukrainian crimes in the past. This is very important: not to be blind about what was going on. And the result of this non-recognition of the crimes, and the absence of the link between crime and punishment, the proper punishment, results in future aggression.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: I will also try to respond to Philippe. I know very well your – and I think it's wonderful – your focus on individual responsibility. And, therefore – correct me if I'm wrong – but in this debate between Lauterpacht and Lemkin, you're rather inclined to Lauterpacht, because he's talking about individual rights. And I remember in your book you were mentioning that the

very concept of genocide is dangerous, because it inflicts that you're blaming the whole community for killing your community. But I think that there is some third way between saying that, 'OK, responsibility is on the individual,' and labelling communities. What we are trying, I think, in Ukraine is not to label (at least myself), not to label the whole Russian community or whatever. I'm very far from a thought that there is no good Russian, OK? Although this is present in Ukrainian kind of discourse, memes, et cetera. And I understand why. Because if you lost your close ones due to the Russian attack, it's very difficult to work with. And I think Ukrainians have the right to this kind of hatred – even hatred.

But what we are talking about is the Russian political system. And I think we should seriously describe this Russian political system or political culture. Because when we're talking about slavery in Europe, or colonialism, it's not that we are talking about the responsibility of certain individuals who were slave owners. It's the responsibility of the system, which was, in a way, in a certain worldview – which would impose the hierarchy of human beings, and saying that white people are capable of freedom and Black people are not capable of freedom, therefore they should be slaves. Right? This is an ideology of nineteenth century racism, which comes not from Germany, but from Britain and France, as we know, and Belgium. But in the same way, I think we should be very serious about Russian political culture, and its certain intellectual and political tradition. I'm not comfortable with saying that it's all about the bad Putin's regime, because otherwise how do we explain the huge support for this war and for Putinism for many years? Is it only about propaganda? I think it's not.

It's not Putin who is coming personally to Ukraine and is killing Ukrainians and making acts of war crimes or genocide in Bucha, in Izyum and many others. It's the Russian citizens. And I think when we try to understand it, there is a big thing that we should reflect upon several notions. The notion of systemic violence in the Russian society; violence as, even, domestic violence; violence which is so present inside human life that people are just not able to see relationships in a horizontal way. And when I'm talking about this, I'm not talking about the wonderful people who go and protest. Of course, these are heroic people, nobody denies it. And it's very difficult for them. But I'm rather talking about why they are so few and why so many people…

Philippe Sands: I've got to come in. This is, really – we are really among friends here. We're having a conversation here. We're in a book forum. We're talking about ideas, we're talking about things. Let's be very clear about the ground

rules. I'll speak for myself. I condemn 1,000 per cent, a war waged by Russia, which is manifestly illegal, which is a crime of aggression, in which war crimes and crimes against humanity are being perpetrated, which are totally unjustifiable. And I have been active – as you have, very – for the last few months, in promoting certain ideas that justice is done in relation to these terrible acts and terrible crimes. That's not on the table. What we're talking about here is a bigger set of issues about blind spots. I like that expression. But this is really delicate, OK? But let's launch in and let's talk about it. And let's talk about it honestly and openly.

Let's start with the United Kingdom. Actually, the United Kingdom has not engaged with its past. The United Kingdom has not even begun to scratch on the surface of the consequences of having had a policy of slavery, of having had colonial policy, which has enriched, essentially, a small number of human beings in the United Kingdom who basically still control society. We know how Britain works. We know the realities. It was – people in this room probably are not aware that compensation was paid after slavery was ended in the 1830s to the slave owners. And probably people in this room don't know the debt that was incurred by the British government was so vast to compensate those slave owners that it was only paid off four years ago. The interest only stopped being paid four years ago.

If you look around the United Kingdom and you see who the large owners of estates and properties are, they are very largely the people who were paid this type of compensation. The country is completely riven by the unaddressed consequences of things that happened a long time ago. So, let's not be starry-eyed about one of my countries and let's not be starry-eyed either about my other country, France. Because if you want to talk about blind spots right now in Africa, let's start with France. But we don't need to go all the way to France or the United Kingdom or Africa. And this is delicate, but let's talk openly about it. Let's start in Lviv, OK?

You say 'Let's focus on individuals, let's focus also on the total culture.' This morning I went to the memorial space of the Golden Rose, which you will know, in Lviv. A remarkable place. Created at the instance of some remarkable Ukrainians, including Sofia Dyak, the Center of Urban History's director, the mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovy, and a whole community of other people. If you go to that place, you will find some memorial stones – black slate. And engraved on some of those stones, you will find a series of words, which are the words written or spoken by people who lived in Lviv and who were removed or lost their lives in the period between 1939 and 1945. And I know one of those people

very well. Her name is Inka Katz. She was a little girl. She lived here. And she described to me – and I put it in my book *East West Street* – looking out of the window on a day in 1942 from the apartment where they lived, and watching her mother being taken away, as she said to me, by Germans and Ukrainians.

So when I was asked to provide some words that could go on one of the stones, I sent those words from Inka Katz. And the organizers: 'Terrific. We will use those words. Absolutely wonderful.' Then a few weeks on, 'Oh, there's a bit of a problem.' You know straight away what the problem is going to be. 'Actually, we can't really use public money to put in a public memorial site that Ukrainians were involved in these horrors.' So I faced a moral dilemma, OK? Either I stick to my ground and I use the actual words Inka Katz said to me. One option was just to scratch out the word 'Ukrainians' and it would just be 'Germans'. That's not acceptable because that's not what she told me had happened. Or you scratch out 'Germans' and 'Ukrainians'. Or you just say, 'Terribly sorry, if you're not going to use all the words, I'm not willing to do it at all.' And on the principle that less is sometimes more, I went for the third option. We just, OK, we'll scratch out Germans and Ukrainians. It's in the book. People can go and find it.

The point is, every community has blind spots. The Ukrainian auxiliary soldiers who carted away that lady to her death had a responsibility for what happened. And, let's be frank, they were supported by a very large number of people. There has been impunity in relation to that issue. Does that make all of Ukraine bad? Of course it doesn't. It's that every community and every culture has a system of governance – whether it's Britain and slavery, Ukraine and what happened in the 1940s, and every other country in the world in relation to issues – that makes it very difficult to tackle these kinds of issues. And that's why I come back. What's happening now in Russia is appalling. What Russia is doing to Ukraine is appalling. But I've got to say, I've got real trouble buying into a narrative that this is something inherent in a particular group of people, because they happen to occupy a particular geographic space. That's what I'm resisting the idea of.

Misha Glenny: Let's take that and look at another example – refract it through the prism of another example – in order to try and understand what the future of Europe and Russia will be. We have one example in the twentieth century, where a really profound ideology of militarism and oppression was defeated, and led – over a number of decades, and I'm not saying that this was an easy process – to the emergence of a very different cultural consciousness. And

that, of course, is in Germany. In particular in the Federal Republic of Germany, because there are problems with the German Democratic Republic and its cultural legacy, which we can see to this day. Is it possible to envisage a cultural shift of that order after this conflict is over? (I know I'm making a big assumption there.) After this conflict is over… A similar shift in cultural consciousness in Russia, a country which possesses almost half of the nuclear weapons on this planet, which, I suggest, makes the parameters that we're dealing with slightly different from the situation in Germany in 1945, when the defeat was total. I just put that out because I want to – I think this conversation is absolutely fascinating and I want to move it a little further forward. Tetyana?

Tetyana Oharkova: Well, this is maybe one of the most important questions now. What to do with Russia after the war. Nobody knows how the war will end. Me neither. We don't know how it will be. We have some hopes. I wrote a number of articles back in March, in April, for different media. My point was always that the war will not be over when – imagine, one day, it seemed to be fantastical back in March or in April, that Ukrainian troops would be able to push the Russians out of our borders. In the beginning, we were talking about 23 February, and then we were talking about the liberation of the whole territory in the limits of '91. But the point that's very important is that what happens next is even more important than this military operation.

Why? Because what we need – to give you a metaphor, what is our Ukrainian dream? Our Ukrainian dream is a museum of Bucha or Mariupol somewhere in the centre of Moscow. It's schoolchildren going to this museum, visiting, acknowledging and it being a part of their history. This is something very important for them. To recognize that even if their parents are not personally guilty, they are not guilty, maybe they are not killing Ukrainians, they were not here, they knew nothing, they could pretend that they knew nothing about this military operation… but they are historically responsible. And this future is important. For this long process, we can look back at what happened in Germany. But I think, now, the situation could be even more complicated. Because if the war is over and Russia is still there, in their borders, with their feeling of humiliation, with their feeling of military defeat – because they will be obliged to pay great contributions – there could be very dangerous [consequences]. [As] happened in Germany after the First World War and which led to Second World War.

So it could be a realistic scenario for the whole to think over the possibility of the – I would not say disappearance of the Russian Federation, but disappearance

of the empire. And there are huge questions there. Everybody would say, 'What to do with nuclear arms? What to do with the control?' And we understand that this idea it provokes fear in the West, in the United States, in Europe, because who controls the nuclear weapons? But if Russia becomes a number – we are not able to say how many – a number of national states… Because Russia is not a national state, it's an empire, [it's made up of] very different identities, of very different oppressed people as well. It would be easier to deal with that and it would be easier to make this procedure of recognition of their crimes. And it would be easier to construct a museum of Bucha or Mariupol in the centre of Moscow.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: I will again come back to Philippe's statements. I think we profoundly disagree on that. That's good. I think it's very wrong to [equate] Western imperialism and Russian imperialism. The difference is… We all know the horrors of Western imperialism. I wrote a book, *Liquid Ideologies,* in which I spent a lot of time not only analysing Nazis and fascism and Stalinism, but analysing liberal racism of the late-nineteenth century. And I'm aware of that. I have no rose-tinted glasses on Europe, that some Ukrainians probably do. But I still think that we can define Europe as the process of the reduction of space for violence. And when I said this in Vienna – I was there in the autumn – we had a very hard discussion there. Because I understand that when a Ukrainian tells this to a Western European, the Western European usually looks at the Ukrainian as very naive, a dumb person who doesn't know history. But the difference is that I fully understand that there are these things that you are talking about, but you can *talk* about this, right? And I think, in the Western world – I remember talking, for example, to Americans, and there is some comparison of Cossacks and cowboys, and saying… In the metaphor of Pavlo's book, there's a metaphor of Wild East, or the Wild West of Eastern Europe. And when I tell this to Americans, they say, 'OK, but for us, this Wild West means the annihilation of the indigenous population,' and we cannot really proceed with this metaphor any more. This romanticism of cowboys is gone. I hope so.

In the Russian empire it's different. You cannot say in Russia, currently, that imperialism is bad. And not only Russian imperialism, but look at how the Russian propaganda depicted the Black Lives Matter movement. They depict it by saying, 'We told you that you were wrong about decolonization, and now all your former slaves are uprising.' So I think that there is this profound difference. That there is a certain – maybe it's not complete, maybe it's not perfect – but there is a certain process in the Western world of repentance, which is re-

ally not the case in our geography. And when I talk about our geography, I don't just mean Russia, I mean Ukraine as well. And I think that what you mentioned about the black pages of our history is a big task for us in the future. That's the homework that Ukrainians haven't done – yet. I'm sure that we will do this. But of course, it's very difficult, frankly speaking, to talk about this during the war, because it is something used by Russian propaganda – saying that all Ukrainians are Nazis. So it's a very difficult moment to talk about this now. And this is the only reason.

Misha Glenny: To be fair to Philippe – he was not suggesting that this become a central part of the dialogue.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: But, of course, it's profoundly wrong – and here I fully agree with Philippe – it is profoundly wrong to say that a certain nation is a saint and another nation is a victim. A certain nation is a perpetrator, and another nation is a victim. That's profoundly wrong. If we go with this logic, that's the logic where we actually justify violence. Because if we say we are all victims, then we give ourselves the right for violence. There's no discussion about that. But I think we should look – we should move away from this labelling of the groups. But I'm asking a different question. I'm asking: what are the structures of the system in society, in Russian imperial society, which empower these things?

Misha Glenny: Which is why I want you to come back to…

Volodymyr Yermolenko: Yes, coming back to your question. I think, at the same time, we overestimate Russia's strength. Ukrainian society is built like a network. Therefore, when Russians think, 'OK, we will kill Zelensky and everything will be over,' I'm sure it would not be over, even if they succeeded. Russian society, maybe I'm wrong, but it's like a pyramid; there a spot and, once it gets damaged, this spot, the central spot, everything will collapse very quickly. That's what happened with the Soviet Union. Now, the question we should be asking for Russia is: what is good for Russian citizens? I think Ukrainians should be asking this: what is good for Russian citizens. And the answer is [that] military defeat is good for Russian citizens. Because historically, in the West, there is this impression that Russia is invincible. When we're looking at Russia's wars,

we are thinking about Charles XII, Napoleon, and Hitler. We don't look at other wars that Russia has lost.

Russia lost the Crimean War, and that opened the way for the cancellation of serfdom. Also for the anti-slavery movement – you can also think about serfdom as a kind of a slavery. And it's very interesting how Ukrainian serfs and our greatest poet Taras Shevchenko and others can also be seen as being within this abolitionist movement, right? So, Russia lost the Crimean War – it liberated its serfs. Russia lost the Japanese War – it opened the way for the Russian constitution, parliament – it didn't last for long. Russia lost the First World War, let's not forget. And it opened the way for the liberal February Revolution, which also didn't last long. Russia lost the Afghanistan War – Soviet Union, right? And the Afghanistan War – it's also very interesting how we approach that memory. It was only after this invasion that in our hometown, Drohobych, the monument for the Afghanistan War, a big armoured vehicle, was removed.

That means that we, Ukrainians, in our public conscience, we were not thinking about the war in Afghanistan as an imperial war. So only now do we understand, 'OK, what they're doing in Ukraine, they also did in Afghanistan.' And we did it in Afghanistan, because there were Ukrainians [fighting] as well. So, loss in a war, in the imperial war, actually benefits Russia. The problem is that it [never lasted] very long. And the whole system – it's not just the Putin years – the whole system, these societal practices, which are based on violence, hierarchy… they came back. It doesn't mean that it will not change, because if we're thinking in terms of 'Russian political culture is inevitable, it will always be like that', we cannot explain why there are two Koreas and why there is Taiwan in China, right? So I'm very far from this. But we should also understand that, yes, military defeat can bring changes in Russia, there can be democratisation… but there is also a risk that it will not last long and we should also be prepared for that.

Philippe Sands: One thing that we can definitely celebrate is here we are, sitting in Lviv, talking completely freely and openly, expressing views where reasonable people can disagree or agree, without any fear of retribution. That is a huge thing. That is a huge and valuable thing, and I think we're in complete agreement on that. We wouldn't be having this conversation on a stage in Moscow. We wouldn't be having this conversation on a stage in Beijing and in many other parts of the world. Let's absolutely celebrate those kinds of issues. I can say the kinds of things that I say about the United Kingdom, and no one comes

down and attacks me or does things to me or anything. That is a fundamental thing that I deeply respect. But it doesn't mean that some of the other issues that we've addressed and talked very frankly about aren't there.

I want to come to your question, because this really is a huge question. And I listened to what you both said on this issue. I've been really clear and surprised myself in how, almost, militaristic I have been in terms of this issue. I came out early on in favour of a no-fly zone, and I would have gone much further, much earlier, in terms of supporting Ukraine, because I think this cannot stand. And I think the question of a military defeat is indispensable. But as you say, Volodymyr, that's not the end of the matter. In 1945, in 1918, there was a military defeat and it was followed by complete disaster. Read Margaret Macmillan's *Peacemakers* to understand the scale of the catastrophe that was unleashed by getting it wrong in the year that followed. And I think that's a very big lesson for all of us.

[In] 1945, somehow, probably more by accident than by design, conditions were put in place which allowed a country that had posed a fundamental threat to European and global well-being to, at least for now – we don't know what will happen in Germany in the future, but at least for now, it's a pretty remarkable place. And coming up with this conversation, just to be aware, I grew up in a household as a kid where we were not allowed to have anything German because the Germans had done things that were so terrible. No German television, no German fridge, no German books, no German nothing. That was the house that I grew up in. And I've ended up in a place, many years on, where one of my best friends is Nicholas Frank, the son of the man who, in this city, came and oversaw the extermination of my grandfather's entire family. So it is possible, in the space of a couple of generations, to have real transformations. And your question opens up the possibility of how do we do that? And that's a really complicated question.

The bit of it that I'm involved in is the justice aspect, which I feel very attached to. And as some of you in the room will know, I've been very active in pushing the idea that, of course, all crimes must be investigated and punished. Taking your earlier words: war crimes, crimes against humanity, in particular. For the record, I don't believe that the evidence, currently, that we know, indicates that genocides are being committed. But reasonable people may disagree about that. But I've also been clear that the most important of all the crimes that is being perpetrated right now is the crime of aggression. It is the waging of a manifestly illegal war. Because without that war, none of the other crimes would be occurring. And my nightmare scenario is that in five years' time we

find ourselves in a situation in which we've got trials – in Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine, and in The Hague, at the International Criminal Court – for essentially low-grade people who did terrible things in Bucha and Mariupol and other things. We have seen the images and we know – and I'm in touch with a lot of the investigators, I have no illusions about what has happened. And those have to be prosecuted fully. But how terrible it would be in five years' time that we have a handful of trials of, basically, kids. And the people at the top remain in power, and we are dealing with them.

That, it seems to me, is not a sustainable solution. The challenge, for Europe and for the rest of the world, is how to avoid that situation. I don't have an easy answer as to how to avoid that situation. But I know it means you've got to begin by putting the accent on the most serious crimes that have been perpetrated, which is a small group of people, involving Vladimir Putin and a number of people around him, and put the accent on the decisionmakers who unleashed these horrors. The complexity – and Germany is different in terms of 1945 – is how do you get an entire political system to take ownership of what has happened. It seems, as we're sitting here, improbable that the museum that would be the equivalent to some of the museums in Berlin – I love your image and wouldn't it be incredible, but it's really hard to imagine that kind of thing happening. How do you get the Russian political system, and the Russian people to take ownership of such an idea, given everything – propaganda and other terms they have been subjected to.

And you can see a scenario where even relatively shortly, the people at the top today are cast aside. Some of them remain, and offer a new regime and, throw these individuals as, sort of, crumbs for justice to be done. And Ukraine is going to face a very difficult moment at a certain point. I think Ukraine will prevail militarily in this conflict, and I think that is a

fine and wonderful thing, and I support it completely. But, at some point – and it has already been addressed in that little window when there were negotiations of a sort taking place in Turkey early on in the conflict, early on in the war – when the Russians, as I understand it, said 'One thing is a prerequisite to a negotiated settlement, to a diplomatic settlement, and that is you take the justice angle off the table. No crimes, no punishment, no nothing.' What does Ukraine do? What does Ukraine do in a scenario where it has liberated its territory, some sort of settlement is done, or is in offer, and Ukraine's leaders are told: 'In order to sign on the dotted line, we want an end to the ICC investigations, we want an end to domestic investigations, we want impunity in relation to people at the top.' What do you do as a political leader?

The world is full of these issues. Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Chile, Argentina. You know better than anyone, Misha. And I think what's wonderful about your question and these responses is it forces us to begin to ask those questions, right now, rather than at the last moment. I am certain that the justice element is part of sorting this out over the long term. But if we get the justice element wrong, it has a possibility of backfiring. And the justice element may mean techniques other than criminal trials. We've seen in South Africa and in Chile and other places the idea of truth and reconciliation, and fact-finding, and who is responsible, and so on and so forth. And it may be we have to be a little bit flexible about how we deal with these issues, and open minded when push comes to shove. But I think these are really complex issues.

Misha Glenny: I want to give Tetyana and Volodymyr another opportunity to intervene. But I think we can make the assumption – let us assume for the moment that Ukraine wins militarily. In that event, I cannot see how Vladimir Putin would remain in power in Russia. The question, then, it speaks to Philippe 's point very well. If you look at Germany, for example, which was a very successful example, as Philippe outlined just now – nonetheless, there were a lot of Nazis who escaped impunity and who actually went on to have very renowned careers in the Federal Republic of Germany as judges, as industrialists, as politicians. I hope that Ukraine is thinking very, very hard, along with the chancelleries of Europe and the White House as well, as to how we're going to address this issue.

Because Putin's defeat is undoubtedly an opportunity. I know there are fears that people say that worse people could come in his place. My feeling is they can't be much worse than what we've got now. So, I really hope that we start thinking about this issue so that once he goes, as Philippe said and as Tetyana you pointed out, we don't get a repeat of what happened after the First World War, which we were told about at the time. Maynard Keynes, among others, outlined exactly what would happen. We really have to get it right. And we all need to think about this together. Europeans, Americans, whether you're living in Washington State, whether you're living in Berlin, or whether you're living in Lviv. A couple of final thoughts from the two of you before I hand it over to the audience.

Tetyana Oharkova: Well, my reaction would be… I'll be short, and maybe I'll repeat what I have already said. That in order to make all this possible – because the question of the responsibility is the key question, I fully agree with all that, this is not only about the war, it is precisely about what will happen after the war. You mentioned that many Germans avoided responsibility. You know these stories. But at the same time, everybody understands that Germany changed radically after these decades, it was a very long process. You know, maybe from inside. But what we see is, it's a completely different culture. So the condemnation was so strong, so radical that nobody dared to think in these terms; not just in Germany. And we hope that one day in Russia we will see the same process. But to do so, we really need this idea to be introduced in society. This is not only about the responsibility of [the individual that is] Putin. Putin will be killed or whatever. We don't care. He might be in court. We don't know exactly how it will be – his own destiny. The most important thing is this common understanding in Russian society that they are responsible – not guilty, because not every one of them is guilty – but they are responsible for that. And this why the museum of Bucha, Mariupol – extremely difficult, but we have to proceed like that. And that is exactly why the possible change of the political subject – I'm talking once again about this possible destruction of the empire, an idea which frightens a lot of Europeans and Americans, because nobody knows how to organize that. This decomposition of the empire is desirable – something that will make things easier. Because it will share out, divide the responsibility, [allow people to] say, 'We are not the same country.' To start from the blank page, start from the very beginning. We acknowledge our crimes and we start a different political story. And maybe this idea – which seems to a lot of people something fantastic, not a realistic scenario at all – will be a possible way out.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: I would add that yesterday we celebrated the Nobel Peace Prize. [The recipients included] the Ukrainian human rights organization the Center for Civil Liberties. And Oleksandra Matviichuk, who is the head of the Center, her major idea, and that of other Ukrainian human rights defenders, is precisely the tribunal for Putin, right? But we should think about this tribunal in a more complex way. The first thing I would like to say is that the evil which is going on right now – its characteristic is that it is *repeated* evil. It's happening today because it was not condemned, this evil. Primarily, the evil of Stalinism was not properly condemned. And I think when we are talking about Europe, I have the impression that post-World War Europe, Western Europe, was developing an idea that there is an absolute evil, which is Nazism. And there are lesser evils, which are, for example, Stalinism. And I think we should

rethink it and say, 'Yes, Nazism is absolute evil. But Stalinism is also absolute evil', and think how they are different, and how they correlate.

But the big question is that Stalinism was not as condemned, as punished, as Nazism was. Even if we take into account what you say about the Nazis continuing their life unpunished. So, again, the question of impunity is a central question. Because it repeats because it is unpunished. Because Russians – Russian soldiers – understand that when they kill people, civilians, there will be no response. This cynicism that we see right now in videos – how Russian soldiers are cynically shelling the civilian cars around Kyiv as if they were in a training exercise, on a shooting training. It shows that they are doing this precisely because they are confident they will not be punished, and not be responsible.

But the last thing I would like to say, and here it's more a question to Phillipe and the podcast that we will make one day...

Misha Glenny: I'm looking forward to that podcast.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: The major question I will ask is: OK we have this revolution in human rights law that you describe after the Second World War, with crimes against humanity, with genocide... What revolution in international law should we make today, after this war? And one of the questions is, of course, the reform of the UN – because it seems that having the veto power by a criminal state is not a good thing. And the second question: can we have, in international law, automatic consequences for the crimes of aggression? So that it's not a political decision, but something automatic, legal.

Misha Glenny: I'm going to let Philippe answer that when I come to the round up. But I want to get the questions in first of all. I'm not one of those people who say you're not allowed to make a statement. You can ask a question or you can contribute to the debate. But I would please beg you to make it short because we don't have much time. Bruno, you've been waiting to speak.

Bruno Maçães ***[from the audience]:*** I think there's a contradiction in what Philippe has been saying, because he said there is a small group of people around Putin that are responsible, that are the decisionmakers, as he said it.

But then you expressed scepticism that after the war Russia will do a lot about what happened. You're clearly sceptical that there will be a museum about Bucha. You're clearly sceptical that there will be a reckoning with what happened. But if it's a small group of people, then the reckoning should be easy. On the questions of labelling: I don't see any problem with labelling. That's what scientists do. Natural scientists and political scientists. You have to label what Russia is. You have to label what Europe is, the topic of this panel. And you had no problem labelling Britain; you labelled it as a post-imperial country, with accounts to be given about its imperial past and an imperial transition. So when you talk about Britain, there was no problem. What's the problem with saying that Russia is an empire today, and that's the label we should use? When you go to India, the problem discussing with Indians is that they don't know Russia is an empire. You have to explain that to them. And I think that's the beginning of wisdom: labels.

Misha Glenny: Thank you, Bruno. There's a question just here that I saw.

Audience member: Thanks very much. Jim Goldston with the Open Society Justice Initiative and NYU Law School. This is a really important and fascinating conversation, thank you for that. I did just want to note, on the important question that you focused on, of what comes after the war. The Ukrainian government and others – Ukrainian society – will be faced with some very, very difficult questions, I agree. But the suggestion that one needs to be flexible, and that maybe it's a truth process, maybe it's a justice legal accountability process, maybe it's other processes … I think one needs to take into account the comparative experience we already have, which suggests that in such transitions from mass violence to other states, other societies, one alone of those solutions is insufficient, frankly. One needs, really, a broad array of tools that include truth and justice and mechanisms that deal with institutional reform to prevent the recurrence of such mass violations. All of those together. None of which is to say any of that is easy, of course. But I think if one looks to specific examples, whether in South Africa or Latin America, where truth processes have been applied, the experience generally suggests that, by themselves, they have either been a prelude to justice in other processes or, by themselves, they've been insufficient to protect against some of the repeats of really horrible situations that we would want to avoid here. These questions are very, very difficult and Ukrainians should be at the centre of answering them. But in this situation, the international community, for better or worse, will have a say in this. And we all need to support Ukrainians rights, and their voices, to be very central to the process. Thank you.

Audience member: I have one very short question: if we want this capacious idea of Europe that maybe, one day, in a looser sense could include a reformed Russian society and a community of nations, somehow – do we need to get rid of the idea of Eastern Europe? Is that a damaging concept that's allowed us to think about Ukraine as 'non-European' or something. Do we have to destroy another idea of Europe if we're going to have this bigger idea of Europe?

Misha Glenny: If I can just abuse my position as chair – I think this is a very interesting question and it's a process that is happening whether people like it or not, inasmuch as in a couple of years' time, roughly, Poland is going to be a net contributor to the European Union. This is going to change the nature of the European Union in ways that are fundamental and people don't fully understand yet. Above all, people in Berlin. That process is underway. The question is, how do we recognize it? And how do we absorb it into the broader culture? But it's a very, very interesting question at the moment. I'm going to take one more question, if I may.

Audience member: This conversation has really challenged some of the views that I have, or I thought I have. I come from a country that is based in genocide. And if you drive down a certain road in Montana and go to a Crow reservation, some have argued there's still a slow-motion genocide going on. And in Sierra Leone, when I was there, the same issue. Philippe, you and I talked yesterday briefly about how you supported your translator in Russia, which you just brought up here, and why I stopped all business with Russia. And I understand both our positions. But from a practical matter, I want to ask you – and I agree with you *[gestures to Philippe Sands]* and I also agree with you *[gestures to Volodymyr Yermolenko]*, which makes me feel very schizophrenic, I must say. The problem that I have from a practical military point of view – when you say we can't single out an entire group. How does the mechanism, then, of fighting a war work? Because I can't envision in Germany, in the 1940s: 'This was a good German, this wasn't a good…' How does that structure work? Where you can retain your humanity, but you must win the war?

Misha Glenny: Thank you very much. I'm going to hand it back to the panellists now to address some of those questions, but also to give their final thoughts. I'm being admonished by the organizers, quite rightly, for running over time, but I am abusing this because of the fact that we started a bit late. And I really think that this is a very, very fruitful conversation. So let me go in the reverse order in that case, Philippe. So you go first, and then Volodymyr and then Tetyana.

Philippe Sands: I won't try to deal with everyone and in particular the Eastern Europe question I think I'll leave to my friends. But, Bruno, I've got no problem being told my positions are contradictory. We're all contradictory. Things are not binary. Life just isn't like that. There are just levels of complexity in any way one approaches things. There was a book published some years ago, which many of you will know, by Daniel Goldhagen called *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. It essentially posited the idea most Germans were responsible, they were participants. And of course, there is an element of truth to this. Most people weren't actually members of the party. A lot were, but not most, weren't. And they kept their heads down and they didn't ask questions and they didn't look around and they carried on in their daily life. They followed the orders and they participated in the Wehrmacht or the SS or in other organizations. So what are we to do when the conflict is over? We saw what happened in Iraq when Paul Bremer took the incredibly stupid decision of removing everyone who'd been a member of a Baath Party from the decision-making process. It was a catastrophe.

In my book *The Ratline,* you will be able to read about my conversations with the writer John le Carré. John le Carré was in Austria, in 1950, as a British young soldier charged with interrogating Germans, on the hunt for Nazis at a senior level. And I said to him, 'What, to prosecute them?' He said, 'No.' This was what was so complicated: it was to recruit them for their Rolodexes, because they had the contacts. They knew where the Communists were. They knew where the new enemy was. So what I'd say, Bruno, is welcome to the real world. There are going to be a lot of Russians out there who have participated and who've supported. But ultimately, as we know the way in which a community works – whether it's Britain, Ukraine, France, Mauritius, Ghana – ultimately, power rests with a very small number of people. Most of the rest, in different degrees, tend to follow or not follow.

So coming to Jim's point: I am in complete agreement with him, it's got to be an array of tools. That's the only way to deal with it. Economic, diplomatic, political, legal, non- contentious truth and reconciliation type things and other means. The design of those mechanisms, of course, reasonable people can disagree about, but it's going to have to be all of those things. But the crucial question is: how do you do it in relation to a country with so many people? How did they do it in Germany? How did they do it in Rwanda? They did it in Rwanda in a really interesting way. They had formalised criminal justice just for a tiny number of people. And then they had something called the gacaca, where they would have local community-level gatherings to talk about responsibility of particular people.

And then, of course, in Chile, we know that for thirty years they basically did a little, but not enough. And then it took the arrest of Augusto Pinochet in London to unleash a change in the domestic criminal order to remove immunity from certain people. These things are really complicated. And I reject the idea that somehow labelling everyone who participated in… What are we going to do? I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of Russians have invaded the territory. What are we going to do? Are we going to put them all on trial for being…?

Bruno Maçães *[from the audience]:* I said we have to label Russia. That's the important label. I don't want to label – I want to label the Russian political regime as what it is. An empire.

Philippe Sands: This particular version of governance in Russia absolutely has imperial aspirations. There's no question. What they're trying to do…

Bruno Maçães *[from the audience]:* It is already an empire, it's not an aspiration.

Philippe Sands: Why does putting a label on it get us any further? I don't understand this fetishization of putting labels on countries or regimes or… It's not how you're going to deal with the realities of the situation. The reality of the situation is that, once this is over, means are going to have to be found to hold those most responsible, at the individual level, to account. No question. And then other means: diplomatic, political, economic and so on and so forth.

I'm just going to give you an example right now to illustrate my profound sense of complexity. And I'm not saying I'm right, I'm just struggling with this issue. I'm doing a case right now for the government of the Gambia at the International Court of Justice, concerning the mistreatment of the Rohingya population by the government of Myanmar, OK? Really nasty stuff. Genocidal, in my view, and in the view of many, many people. So we're now before the International Court of Justice and we face a situation as the case goes forward. Just so that you're aware, the International Court of Justice has never found a state responsible for the crime of genocide. In relation to Serbia – it found Serbia responsible for having failed to prevent others from committing genocidal acts in Bosnia. Paramilitary organizations. A cardinal distinction. As I'm preparing this case for the Gambia against Myanmar, one of the real challenges that I face is that I know many of the judges are going to find it very difficult to pin on the label of an entire country that it is a genocidal country. That Myanmar would become the first country in human history to be labelled a genocidal state. That's a pretty bad label to have. And you know what? It is a label that will last forever.

And it causes me to raise the question: is this the best way of preventing genocide? Is this the best way of getting countries to come to terms with things that have happened? Do you go for collective responsibility of state? Do you go for individual responsibility? These are really complex issues. But to draw a line under all of this – whatever solution is chosen, whatever path is taken, will have unintended consequences. And those unintended consequences will open the door to further mischief that we cannot predict going forward. That's the difficulty as humans that we face. It's a fundamental complexity. It's amazing that we're talking about this issue – and I will close now – in Lviv, because the heart of my book *East West Street* is this immense struggle. Immense. It goes to the very nature of human existence – I realized only after I'd written the book – between who we are, how we identify ourselves: as individuals or as members of a group? How do we punish people: as individuals or because they're a member of a group?

And you're right, Volodymyr. Throughout *East West Street,* I have this inner conflict between the idea of Lauterpacht, which is to focus on the protection of the individual and the punishment of the individual. And Lemkin – both men studied here in Lviv – who says fine, but individuals don't get targeted because of what they have done individually, they get targeted because they're a member of a group that is hated at a particular moment in time and place, and so the law must reflect that factual reality, and so we need the concept of genocide. And the debate between the two men continued; they never agreed about it. It

is true that for 98.5 per cent of *East West Street,* I'm intellectually with Lauterpacht. But right at the end of the book, in the last paragraph of the book, when I am twenty-five kilometres from Lviv, in a small town now called Zhovkva, which used to be called Żółkiew, I stand at a mass grave with three and a half thousand people in it. Still today unmarked by the public authorities of Zhovkva, or Lviv Oblast, or Ukraine. Three and a half thousand human beings who were killed because they happened to be a member of a group that was hated at a particular moment in time and place. And at that point, of course, I'm with Lemkin. Of course, I feel that sense of connection with the group, and I find my intellectual ideas melting away in the face of basic human instincts of kinship and association. So it's mightily complex. And I think that's really all I'm trying to say in my interventions. The idea that there are simple solutions – and I'm not for a moment saying, I know you understand it – I'm not for a moment saying you're proposing simple solutions. It's really complex.

Misha Glenny: Thank you, Philippe. I do want Tetyana and Volodymyr to have a significant response to anything that they've heard from the questions and from Philippe. So, Volodymyr, first.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: Firstly, let me address what Bruno said about empire. I think we definitely should promote the idea, and explain it: that Russia is an empire, and this is one of the causes of this war. Because if you read Russian ideologists, like Surkov, for example, they are saying, clearly, why Russia should wage wars. Russia should wage wars outside, [so as] not to have wars inside – this is a very imperial idea. Empire is something that has a centre and doesn't have borders. That's a clear distinction with a nation state, which is defining itself within borders. So why should we talk about Russian imperialism? Because, coming back to Misha's early question about the world, because Russia is now polarizing the world, it is saying, 'Look, we are the leaders of this anti-Western world, which is an anti-imperialist world.' And this is the big lie, because Russia is itself a horrible empire.

Coming back to the question of Europe, I think when we look at the European Union from the point of perspective that many of us talk about the European Union – starting from this coal and steel community, wherever possible, to economics, et cetera – we are profoundly wrong. Because I think we should be looking at, for example, people like Coudenhove-Kalergi, who wrote *Paneuropa* in 1922. If you read this text carefully – a very prophetic text, in which

he says, 'Look, the problem is that the next partition of Poland is inevitable.' And he's writing this in 1922. 'And we need some kind of a United States of Europe.' Not because we need prosperity, or whatever, because he understood that there are two imperial projects: the Germanic one, which would become a Third Reich, and the Russian one, which will become a Soviet Union, which have these expansionist motivations and expansionist powers. And sooner or later they will crush Central Europe. And that's what happened. So, I think we need to look into the intellectual traditions of Europe precisely in this way: Europe as an alternative between two extremes, nationalism and imperialism. The nationalism of… ah, Philippe doesn't agree.

Philippe Sands: Just think of Britain and France.

Misha Glenny: OK, carry on in the in the break or the podcast.

Volodymyr Yermolenko: So I think that this is, however imperfect, but this is the way that Europe has invented. And for us, Ukrainians, I think it's a very interesting thing. And by the way, it's very much linked to the Ukrainian intellectual history, because if you look at the Ukrainian intellectuals of the nineteenth century, like Drahomanov or others, and what they're dreaming about. They were dreaming about a republic of people. So that's what the European Union has become. And that's probably the idea for the world as well. So, I think we need to think about Europe in these anti-imperialist terms, and anti-nationalist at the same time. And, therefore, conceptualizing Russia as the last empire in Europe is very important.

And coming back to, very shortly, to the Eastern Europe question. I frankly don't have problems with the concept of Eastern Europe. I think it's OK. I think we need to rethink because, again, this region was dominated by Russian narrative, and there's this idea that in the nineteenth century, Eastern Europe [equals] the Russian Empire. But in Eastern Europe, in this region, we have very long history of non-tyrannical politics. I would call it Republican politics. We are talking about the Medieval Rus of Kyiv. We are talking about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. We're talking about Rech Pospolyta. We are talking about many other things – Cossack statehood. And I think this is the time when this anti-tyrannical idea of politics, a Republican idea of politics – by Republican I

mean the Latin word res publica, which is the translation from the Aristotelian word politeia, which has roots here. So it is wrong to believe that here you have only imperial politics, only tyranny, and nothing else is possible. No, we have much deeper roots of anti-tyrannical, non-tyrannical politics here. And I think this is the time when this is all reviving.

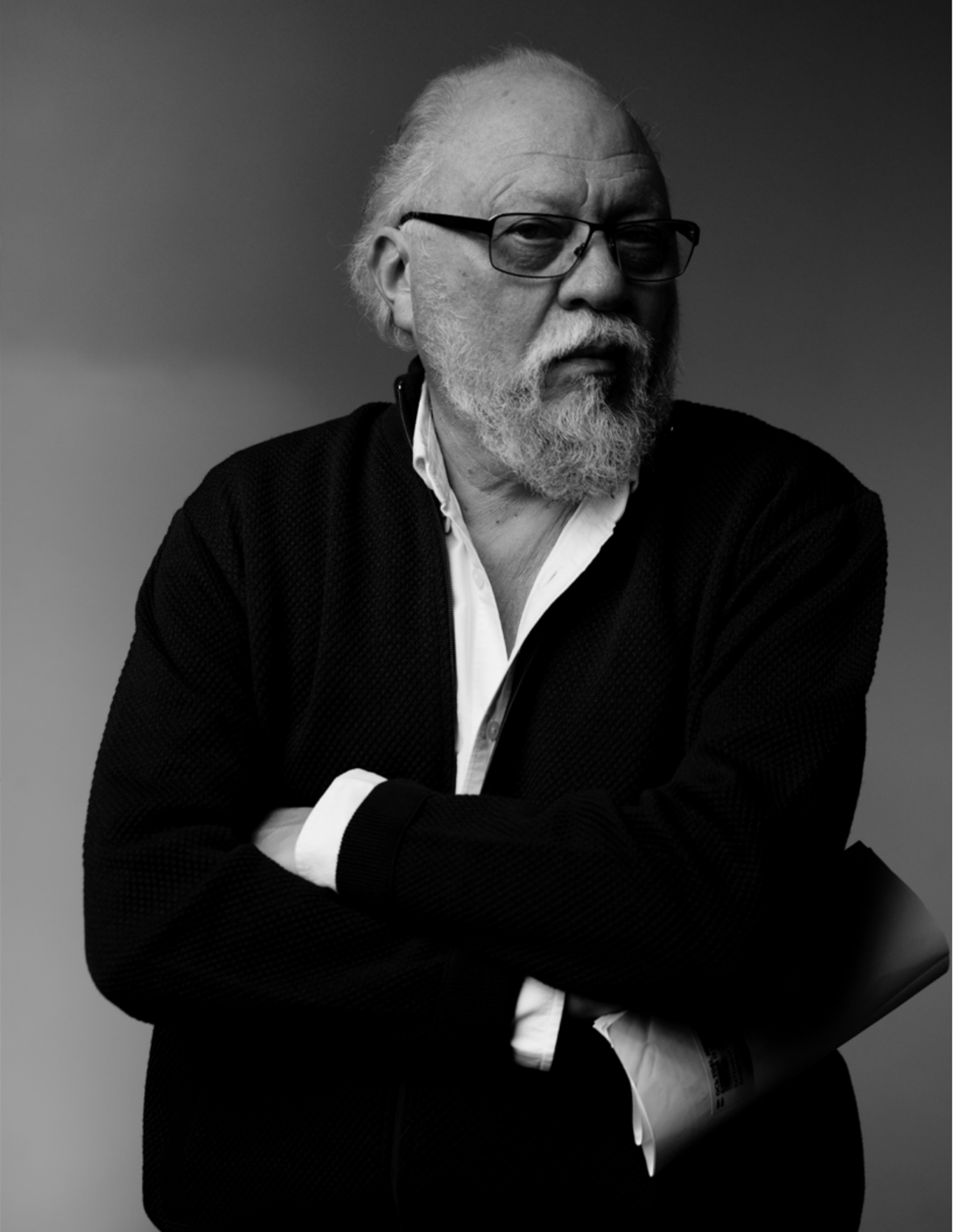
Misha Glenny: Thank you, Volodymyr. And, Tetyana, the last word to you.

Tetyana Oharkova: Frankly, I think a lot of things have already been said…

Volodymyr Yermolenko: You should [say] something that Philippe will totally disagree with. *[Laughter from the audience]*

Tetyana Oharkova: I'll be short. Let's maybe come back to Pavlo Kazarin, who's not with us today. He started his speech stating that – he said that there's a moment when we cannot talk, but we have to act. So, we are talking freely. It was an extremely rich discussion and we really appreciate the possibility to talk freely about a subject – even to disagree in some moments, that's not important. What's important is we can talk about it. But let's also understand that all of this is possible because other people act now, in this very moment on the front line, for the sake of us, for the sake of our free exchange of ideas. And so let's thank Ukrainian Armed Forces for all the possibility for this democratic discussion. Thank you.

Misha Glenny: That's a terrific sentiment to end on, Tetyana. I'd like to thank you and Volodymyr and Philippe and, of course, Pavlo Kazarin for his particularly powerful contribution. I also want to thank the Hay Festival, who made this possible, along with the Lviv BookForum. And if I may be so immodest, the IWM in Vienna as well. I think this has been a terrific discussion; I've got a lot out of it. But I also think it's the beginning of the discussion, or the middle of the discussion. It's certainly not the end. There are many, many things that we've got to think of and face in the coming months and years. So I want you to give a really generous round of applause to our panel, and to Pavlo.



Imperialism and Identity

Participants: Jon Lee Anderson (Chair), Lydia Cacho, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Ihor Pomerantsev, Olena Stiazhkina
Pre-recorded video message: Dmytro Krapyvenko

Jon Lee Anderson: It's a great pleasure to be here in Lviv with the BookForum, and to be introducing this panel on 'Imperialism and Identity'.

Joining us from the UK is Abdulrazak Gurnah, Tanzanian–British writer and the Nobel Laureate for Literature for 2021. We have Ihor Pomerantsev, a veteran journalist, born in Ukraine. And we have Olena Stiazhkina, born in Donetsk, herself a writer, publicist and an activist now. We're going to be joined by Dmytro Krapyvenko, a Ukrainian journalist and now a soldier with the Ukrainian Armed Forces. He's going to be joining us with a short video, and we're going to begin with that. Lydia Cacho, to my side, is a Mexican author and human rights activist, whom I've known for quite some years.

We're going to be exploring these themes that have been handed to us to thrash out together today. So maybe we can watch the video.

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Dmytro Krapyvenko *[pre-recorded video]:* Hello, my name is Dmytro Krapyvenko, ex-Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* ('Ukrainian Week'), lecturer at the Ukrainian Catholic University, fighter in the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Today, when we talk about post-colonialism and imperialism in the Ukrainian context, we understand that we are somewhat late to these conversations. After all, post-colonial theories appeared several decades ago, and the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Frantz Fanon were written mainly about the countries of Africa and the Middle East, as well as Asian countries. And today, when it comes to the war in Ukraine, there is a certain misunderstanding. They say that there is no such solidarity with the countries of Africa, which also suffer from wars; they say that there is, allegedly, racial prejudice and that post-colonialism is only about certain regions. I believe that this is not the case. That everything that was written by theorists such as Edward Said is just as true for the peoples invaded by Russia. Unfortunately, there is not much

talk about pro-Russian imperialism in the post-colonial context. And in order to mark ourselves in the world coordinate system, we must say that post-colonial theory in culture and literature – in the worldview sense – also applies to the peoples invaded by Russia. I am talking about the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Belarus and the countries of Central Asia. This is precisely where we lack the solidarity to say: if we do not tolerate imperialism, we do not tolerate Russian imperialism too. For this, it is necessary that our Ukrainian intellectual circles join and that we can convey to the whole world that Ukraine is a former colony as well as, for example, India or Ireland – another example of the existence of a colony on the European continent.

If we put the question this way, we will be better understood all over the world. Our war for liberation will be understood in the right context, and there is no need to talk about the spheres of Russia's interests. Today it is indecent to talk about France's spheres of interest or England's spheres of interest in the former colonies. And, so, this is also unfair in relation to Ukraine. I think that we need solidarity in a broad sense with the intellectual circles of the countries that were also once colonies, among the diasporas living in the former metropolises. And this broad dialogue will enable us to understand each other and develop a single context for condemning imperialism in all its manifestations.

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Jon Lee Anderson: Yes. Interesting. It sparks with my own thoughts coming here. The programme gives us a heads-up on what they hope we will explore, which is that colonialism has shaped the national identities of countries all over the world. What can we learn from the experiences of Latin America, Africa and the Middle East about the post-colonial experience? And is there any form of post-colonial solidarity with Ukraine?

I was pondering this as I flew here from Brazil the other day, and after having spent part of the summer in Ethiopia, and as an American living in England. We all have – we all live in a time of shape-shifting national identities, in some cases. I come from a country where the majority of the population don't regard themselves as living within an empire, and certainly not a colonizing people. I think that's probably the product of a culture that's grown out of a sense of anti-colonial struggle – that is certainly the education we receive as Americans, that we've fought the British and freed ourselves. And there's a culture of, I would say, denialism among many Americans about the idea that they have, in turn, become an empire, and imposed colonial relationships on other countries.

That becomes difficult to accept when you see its relationship with the people in the immediate south – Lydia's country, Mexico – and further south in Central America. I've noticed this myself over the last thirty years, since the wars of the late Cold War that were fought there, in which the United States played a strong role on behalf of the anti-communist side in the name of democracy. Having won [at] around the same time as the Soviet Union imploded, a change began in the region, which was the spread of the market economy, a notional democracy in the form of elections every four years, no longer military dictatorships outright… And, increasingly, the flow of the people of the south to the north where they live, send money back and come back and forth.

It struck me that we were a colonial power. Or, perhaps, that countries – the peoples of places like Guatemala, Mexico and many others – were not post-colonial, having long before shaken off Spain, but were now quasi-colonial subjects of the United States, in a new sense. Increasingly, I saw indigenous Guatemalans who had spent several years working in factories or as labourers in the United States, coming back and, with the money they'd earned, building little houses, which they painted with naive dollar bills, or in emulation of the White House. And incorporating Pentecostalist gospel to their own religious faith. So a kind of syncretism is forming, and I think we see this all around the world. It's not easy, to sum up, what imperialism and identity is – or perhaps it is.

I just wanted to ruminate about that, to share that, as an American, and to say, in response to the question – and I'd then like to go to Abdulrazak – the question asks us: is there postcolonial solidarity with Ukraine? I would argue – not much. Not much from the parts of the world that we're talking about, the Global South. And I was wondering why that was. And I think it is that, to a large extent, the Cold War narratives of 'America – imperialist power', 'Soviet Union – an ally of the struggling peoples of the South', has endured, despite the obvious changes in the world and indeed in the former Soviet Union.

I struggle to talk with friends on the left, in Africa and in Latin America – when I ask them about Ukraine, their almost immediate response is that it's because of NATO's intervention, because of the expansionist aggression of NATO. In other words, Putin's narrative. So, however, it's happened, that's where we are in much of the world. Putin has quite cleverly – ingeniously is probably too strong a word – to revivify this idea of fraternity between the old socialist world, between Mother Russia and the countries with which the Soviets stood by in the Cold War.

I could say a lot more about that, but I think if there was any doubt about this – admittedly, it's anecdotal – I woke up this morning with a tweet someone shared with me, reminding me that it was Putin's seventieth birthday today. And not only the gift he was given on the bridge to Crimea, but a happy birthday from Evo Morales, the former president of Bolivia, and the *de facto* leader today, the leader in the shadows. One of his associates now runs the country. But he wrote, this is his tweet, which sorts of sums up, I think, the challenge. I'm translating from Spanish. And this is a tweet from Evo Morales today. Who was president for thirteen years and I should just say, is a native Aymara, that is the indigenous majority of Bolivia, a country that, like most of the other countries of Latin America, was colonized by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Most of them received their independence at various moments in the nineteenth century; they've been – [for] 120 and 150 years, most have been independent. It was only upon Evo Morales's election to the presidency in 2006 that the indigenous majority of the country finally put someone in the presidency. He held on to it as long as he could, and he regards himself as someone on the left. So there's a lot about indigenous redemption there and he espouses an anti-colonial rhetoric that's very much of the past, of the Cold War, you could say.

He says: 'Many happinesses to our brother, the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, on the day of his birthday. The dignified, free, and anti-imperialist peoples accompany your struggle against the armed interventionism of the United States and NATO. The world will find peace when the United States stops assaulting life.' That's the tweet.

On that, maybe, unsettling note, I'd like to begin with our friend and guest Abdulrazak Gurnah, and ask him his own reflections on this. You left Zanzibar in 1964 to come to England, essentially the former colonial power of Tanzania, and have lived there most of your life. And you've written at great length, and reflected at great length, about this issue – split identity – but have also asserted your right to be an author in your own right and not only be a symbol of some notional struggle or other. And yet the colonial experience and the post-colonial experience is something that you've obviously lived with closely your entire life. What are your reflections in light of what's happening today, here? Is there anything from your own experience that you feel can be shared and explored vis-a-vis Ukraine and Russia?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Yes, thank you very much for the invitation to speak, and thank you to the festival for inviting me to join you. I was most moved by the

video with which this conversation opened, both with the argument that it was presenting about the shared experience, I suppose, is what it was aiming for, and also a kind-of reaching out to say, 'Let us all make a better job of understanding each other's circumstances.' Because that, I guess, would make the argument against imperialist aggression stronger. This is all good. But I was most impressed also by both the delivery and the sincerity and the intellectual desire behind what was being set.

You mentioned in your introductory words about how it seems to you anyway, evident that there is little sympathy for what is happening to the Ukrainian in the Global South, that is to say, in the formerly colonized parts of the world. I don't know who you've been talking to, but from the sound of it, it sounds as if you've been talking to people who are probably in positions of power, authority or something like that. Rather than with people who do not have to, as you are, be making public statements – even if they are made privately, but, in a sense, they are quotable statements – whether they would also show no enthusiasm or any sympathy for Ukraine. I think part of the problem of the lack, as you remark on it, is a rather incomplete understanding of what is going on in Ukraine, is a rather incomplete understanding of what the internal empire of the former Soviet Union, or Russia – which of course had been going on for centuries before it was the Soviet Union, into Central Asia and parts of Europe and so on – it could well be that people just simply don't quite understand that. They see on a map a block which says 'Russia' or which says 'Soviet Union', and have no sense of that evolution and the aggression which produced this empire.

We tend to think of colonialism as the European expansion to the non-European world. But there are other forms of colonialism, evidently so: China, the Soviet Union, India, to a certain extent, as well. And these are empires that colonize adjacent territory rather than cross the seas to do so. It is in that respect that I'm saying that it's possible that people who have suffered that other kind of colonialism – complete strangers turning up in their midst, different languages, different religion, different appearance, who turn up in their midst and take over their lives – that is a different kind of phenomenon, probably, it seems to them, from the phenomenon of your neighbour [being] aggressive, if it's understood at all. And that's the pity of it. The pity of it is that those forms of aggression, Russian aggression, for example – but as I say, it's only an example… Chinese aggression, equally… the United States it is a different case altogether, its empire is now global – it goes anywhere once and creates havoc and clears up and goes home. These are all different forms, and I think we really do need to keep hanging on to those differences. That it is perhaps not always completely

useful to say we are all victims of imperialist aggression, because the differences do matter too.

Jon Lee Anderson: Yes, absolutely fascinating. Indeed, I have been talking to people in power, but also not. One of the things that I've noticed is that, by and large, the narrative that accrued in the Cold War, I think that's what I was trying to say earlier, has somehow managed to perpetuate itself through lack of information and ignorance, in much of the world. What happens here is simply over the horizon for many people in Peru or the Congo, let's say, or Myanmar, for a grab bag of places. And I think that this idea – that was perpetuated quite successfully, and in some cases truthfully – that the Soviet Union was on the side of the anti-colonial struggles in that time, fifty or sixty years ago, has endured through other relationships. And the United States, perhaps, as the quote, unquote, 'empire', has not done enough to establish its own narrative. That certainly is what is talked about now in circles of people I talk to. It's not that people don't sympathize, of course, with Ukrainians when they see civilians being bombed or killed. But they don't have a greater understanding and very often they fall back, in my experience, on the explanation that this is something that's been pushed, unfortunately, by the United States and its expansionist genesis, which is NATO. And, of course, that is also Putin's narrative. So it works quite well in that regard and it allows people not to see it perhaps for what it is. Olena, perhaps you would like to share your thoughts on this as Ukrainian

Olena Stiazhkina: Thank you, colleagues. I would like to say two introductory sentences. First of all, I am grateful to the Armed Forces of Ukraine for every minute and every second that gives us the opportunity to live. We're all living on credit given to us by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Not just us, but all of Europe, is living on this credit. Secondly, I want to mark my position as someone lacking objectivity. I cannot have a broad outlook now, because the prevailing emotion, including the intellectual emotion, is rage. And we are all now experiencing the two hundredth day of February, and we must recognize that often our thoughts are provoked by rage. But it is definitely a resource. And we fight because rage is our resource.

I would like to say a few words about Russian imperialism and Russian colonial policy, in the context of why the West often fails to see it, and why, today, colonized peoples are often in solidarity with Russia, and not with us. I completely understand the complexity of the process – but now I'll outline a simplified approach. And the idea is the following: lots of modern researchers and philosophers pay attention to the fact that temporal regimes are not an ontological given; they are no objective reality. The temporal regimes in which communities and societies live are determined by the values that they claim as their fundamental values, and by those values that they cross out, do not use, or even deny. This is not a new idea. It's an idea that anthropologists have put forward since the mid-twentieth century – that different societies at the same time can live in different chronological orders.

Despite the fact that all imperialisms have similar features, they also have many specific and unique ones. Russian imperialism – which we've discussed little and understood little ourselves – has, in my opinion, a specific feature. If Western imperialisms developed in one way or another within the context of change, of time passing, with an orientation towards the future, and therefore towards technology, trade, ideas, values … and even now, the so-called imperialisms, which were and are now being realized – they are still based on change and values. If we look at the Russian version of imperialism, we see that time moves differently there. It goes in a circle. This is time where there is no tomorrow, because it is completely oriented towards the past, always and with regards to everything. Which means that tomorrow is very short. The next day, the next year, will be the same as the previous one.

One can see many reasons for this. For example, the resource-based economy – the usage, within the country and for export, not of technology, but of raw materials and products of first processing. But the main thing is not even the state economy, but the economy of an average person, which is part of the natural and, even, appropriating household. People hidden from view of Western professionals and experts live in small towns without water, without gas, without electricity. They live from their allotments and from forests, where they collect wood, for example, to heat their homes. From this point of view, when we read that mobilized … for mobilized Russians on Sakhalin they give five kilograms of fish, and in Mordovia they give a ram, and somewhere else they give you a kilo of firewood … From the Western change- and value-based view, this sounds wild. But for someone living in a natural, farming-based economy it sounds quite acceptable. Because a person is taken out of the natural household and they give …

Jon Lee Anderson: May I just ask you a question?

Top (from left to right): Jon Lee Anderson, Lydia Cacho, Ihor Pomerantsev and Olena Stiazhkina
Bottom: Abdulrazak Gurnah

Olena Stiazhkina: May I continue? And in this way they provide a substitute for the now-mobilized recruit. That is, he can't buy a ram while he is not there, but here is a ram for the family, and they can live. These different times create different views. That is, the West looks at Moscow and St Petersburg as classical Russia, and classical Russia lives in a completely different way. But this leads to another point of view. A Russian looks at the West from the point of view of hypocrisy, because it also seems to them that Munich and, say, Paris, are facade cities, while in real life people live as badly as they do. This imperialism, in my view, is incipient, never completed, threatened, unstable, and therefore is constantly reproducing itself.

Jon Lee Anderson: It's fascinating what you're what you're saying, and it reminds me that just before we went live, Ihor was saying that maybe it would be better if we talked about identity rather than imperialism. I can understand how we're tempted to go down many rabbit holes here, and they are legitimate. But I would like to try if we can, to stick to the manifest we were given, which is to try to understand how the rest of the world is seeing Ukraine. So really for Ukrainian – I think it would be interesting to ponder … what's the narrative that the Ukrainians need to alter this perception that's out there, because it is out there.

And again, going back to Abdulrazak's, sort of, remonstration after my introduction, which was that he didn't know what sort of people I was talking to. I have to insist, I think that, obviously, there are plenty of people who sympathize with ordinary Ukrainians. But, by and large, the Ukrainian narrative is still being built, and it's being built in the vortex of war, and against a backdrop of duelling – the language of war – and duelling discourses. And so the Ukrainian identity is still up for grabs. And I understand that it's being asserted here, in the face of aggression in which the regional power, Russia, is denying your culture, denying your identity. So I understand also your emotion, which you expressed at the beginning.

I would just like to maybe go to Ihor, since I think you have some thoughts on this. And as I said, just before we went on the air, you were saying, rather wanly, that you wished that we could just talk about identity. So maybe that would help us here.

Ihor Pomerantsev: Thank you, Jon. Our programme director, Sophia, asked which language is preferable for me, and I said Ukrainian. So I'll switch to Ukrainian.

You know, I am a writer. I like concepts and ideas, especially when they are so tangible. Two hours ago, Volodymyr Yermolenko was talking about the agora – this was the marketplace in Athens, where people exchanged ideas, concepts and goods. And for me, as a writer, this is a form of applied imperialism, applied identity. Talking about identification, well, I think this is the problem of every ordinary human. We are all very complicated. I will give an example from my life, because I am a writer. I have three grandsons, and two grandsons are twins. Isaac and Jacob. When they were three years old, I took Isaac to a big mirror and asked him: 'Who is this?' And he said, 'This is Jacob.' Then I brought Jacob to this mirror and asked him 'Who is this?' He said, 'This is Isaac.' What is it all about? This is because young children do not have abstract thinking as yet. They cannot generalize.

As far as I am concerned, you know, this problem has arisen several times in my personal life. I remember at the KGB interrogations in Kyiv, there was a major, and he set a trap for me. He thought that he was very smart, and he asked me: 'What do you consider yourself – a Russian or a Jew?' I realized it was a trap. If I say I am Russian, he will say 'Listen, you are a patriot, you must be a patriot.' If I say I am Jewish, he will say, 'Why aren't you in Israel?' I thought and said, 'I am a Ukrainian.' He was very angry, he was furious, and he said to me, 'Are you a jester or a serious person?'

Another feature of self-identification: when I emigrated, the first place I went to was Istanbul. This was such a fairy-tale city, my dream. I arrived in Istanbul and at the airport the border guard was looking at my passport. He examined it, and there was something he got interested in. And he says to me in English: 'Welcome, Mr Saratov.' I was born in Saratov, this is a stain on my life, but my father is a military journalist and I just happened to be born in Saratov. And then I realized that he hadn't looked at my name, but at Saratov, the place where I was born. This is a Turkish word meaning 'yellow mountain'. So, for him my identification was through the Turkish word 'yellow mountain'. This is not the final story of my family. My son was ten months old when we emigrated from the Soviet Union, and so he grew up in London, he is from London. And when he went to school, and it was a very good school, the first thing they said to him was, 'You are a Russian spy.' I even know who said it. This was said by his classmate, he was the son of Frederick Forsyth, the author of famous spy novels.

But, you know, it was already perestroika, Russia was in fashion, and somehow this nickname didn't stick. Then my son grew up, you know, for me he is still a child. He was a first-generation immigrant, and I realized that the most important thing in England is phonetics, how you pronounce words. I sent him to a good school and all my fees went to this private school. And he finished that school, and he spoke English like the Queen. After school he entered the University of Edinburgh. The first thing he faced at the University of Edinburgh was insults and offences from the Scots. 'You're a nasty Englishman.' There was even an incident where he was riding a bicycle around Edinburgh and he heard someone shouting at him, 'Ride back to England!' He wondered how they could tell he was English just by looking at his back.

Now about my grandchildren, Isaac and Jacob. They were born in Moscow, and my son called me and I asked him: 'What did you name my grandchildren?' He said Isaac and Jacob. I said: 'Listen, it will be Yasha and Izya in Russian. Pack your bags and leave within the month.' He did it. They came to London. They are currently studying in Washington. And back in February, after the Russian aggression, Isaac and Jacob went to school and they were asked, 'Are you Russians?' I had already prepared them, and they said, 'Relax. Our mother is from Kyiv, our grandmother is Ukrainian from Kharkiv, we are Ukrainians.' This is how they became Ukrainians at the Washington school.

But why am I telling you all these funny stories, these personal stories? It's to illustrate how difficult, how complicated it is to understand oneself. Identification begins with the question, 'Who am I?' And I'm happy because my son Peter, he only lived in Ukraine for ten months, but when the war started, he wrote an essay where he said: 'I am a Ukrainian.'

Jon Lee Anderson: Lydia – this is so fascinating. I've always considered myself an American, despite the fact that I was raised abroad in nine different countries. I've never had any choice but being American, because I sound like one. I look like one. And I've come from the superpower. So I've always experienced the confrontation with the cultures – the local cultures that see me as a representative of the superpower. And so I'm curious, talking to Lydia, who comes from the country that's contiguous, geographically, to the United States. And for those of you who may be unfamiliar with the history, like most of Latin America, Mexico was a Spanish colony. There was also an attempt, by France, to seize it as a colony, belatedly, in the 1860s and they put a Hapsburg Prince on the throne, who declared himself emperor. After that, it became an independ-

ent country again. And in the course of the nineteenth century, the Americans saw fit to invade several times. And after occupying Mexico City, the capital, in the 1840s, for a certain period of time, they withdrew their forces. This was after a brief war. But only when Mexico handed over about half of its territory. Most of what is today, the western United States was Mexican until 1846 or 1847. That includes pretty much everything right up to the Canadian border. All of California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona – all of those states were Mexican. So, you've grown up in Mexico. And of course, these two countries have to live side by side. I think it's interesting because in some ways one can find something analogous with this mixed identity, perhaps, and certainly a common frontier with an acrimonious neighbour, or a neighbour that has designs on your turf – as well as shared blood, shared DNA.

How do you view the United States from your perspective? It's a relationship of mutual dependency, yet it's an unequal one. And of course, in the course of time, there are now millions of Mexican-Americans, who are somehow different than Mexicans, aren't they? Maybe you can explain that. I think in light of what Ihor has just shared with us there's something there as well. I don't know. And how does this idea of what is it to be Mexican and what is it to be a Mexican-American? is that something different? And how does this make you feel about the conflict here, and about Ukrainian identity?

Lydia Cacho: Thank you very much. Well, that's a long question. I would say that I am a Mexican, but I also identify as a woman of the world. And I also identify as an investigative reporter that has travelled around the world, for thirty-five years, doing my work. So I began identifying with the victims in different countries, including mine, when I investigated and interviewed them, because they touch you. When you interview someone, when you go to a country, as we are right now, we are touched by the story. And even though we leave that geography, we stay with that part. So I think that our identity keeps evolving, as long as we evolve as human beings. I don't believe in patriotism. I do understand it's needed when in war times, of course, to defend your own country. But I don't believe in it as an idea for Mexican people. What I can say is, as a Mexican, if I go to Guatemala or El Salvador or even Colombia, we Mexicans are regarded as the powerful Latin Americans, because we are near the US. But right now I'm living in exile in Spain, because I investigated a group of organized criminals linked to the Mexican government – they tried to kill me several times and I put some of them in jail.

Now I'm in exile. I've been in exile in Spain for two years, and now in Spain I am the poor Mexican persecuted by this barbarian country. I am not the Mexican investigative reporter, an expert on organized crime, international, transnational and Russian organized crime – we'll talk about that, if you wish. I am the victim of the system, and they want to keep me in that little tiny box, as the persecuted Mexican that acquired a new European passport, and this absolutely changed my life and it has to change my identity. I have to stay a survivor of a failed system in Mexico, and I refuse to do that. So I really relate to what's going on right now in Ukraine, and I relate to your pain and to your anger. I understand exactly how these layers of emotions and this need to bring this to an intellectual conversation.

Yesterday, Elif Shafak said something that I wrote down for today. She said: 'The toxic imperial nostalgia of the populist totalitarian leaders is hurting everyone.' And that's what is going on in Latin America, regarding the war in Ukraine. I guess a lot of people, like Mexicans, and Mexicans in the US, who need to feel more American than Mexicans – they deny their roots in so many ways, because they are afraid to be constantly mistreated, to be ostracized. We've lived with that all of our lives. We are afraid to be ostracized because we don't belong to any empire. We belong to weak countries in which the US constantly evolves in new ways to make us slaves, in different ways. Labour slavery in the US with Mexicans and Central Americans – it's very important, it's a big issue. And I think I can compare it perfectly to what Russia has been doing to the Ukraine. Because we have to talk about that when we talk about Ukrainian identity, or Mexican identity. That is, who is the most powerful individual or group of individuals doing these politics and creating a crisis in order to force people to question their own identity. If you don't have freedom, you don't have time to question your identity. You just have to fight for freedom.

I will stop for a while just to [note] that the Hay Festival, and all the organizers, made us able to speak in English, because there's a wide audience around the world listening to these conversations – everywhere, including Mexico. So I want to address this: according to the UN, a month ago, there were 17.7 million Ukrainians in need of humanitarian aid. There are 2.1 million children from the Ukraine in need of help. There are 6.6 million internally displaced people, according to the UN, from August 17, 2009. And almost 6.9 million have fled Ukraine and have been resettled in different European countries.

In Latin America … Not mine, because I don't consider him my president, [but] López Obrador, he's a leftist (apparently), and he and some of his party members are standing with Russia. We are slaves of the empire of the US. But they

believe, in their imaginary, that Russia is what a lot of people believe it was – what you just said *[gesturing to Olena Stiazhkina]*. That it lives in the past and is projecting [its] identity of socialism and equality in the search for every poor person to live safely. Which is a mirage, it's not true. But a lot of people in Latin America, like Evo Morales, like everywhere, are doing this.

This is a huge problem, because how do you comment? How do you connect to people? Trying to make them understand that Putin's regime is trying to destroy Ukraine. It's invading Ukraine and it's trying to get Ukrainians out of their own territory. That's the message we have to talk about, I think. And that's part of – how do you identify yourself right now? The same as we all do when we run away from violence. It's not only [about] the territory. It's that they want to get you out of it – as they have done it to many of us around the world. So, I don't know. I think identity changes for individuals as we survive different kinds of violence – state violence or domestic violence, as they were saying before. And I don't know – I just wanted to put this on the conversation.

Jon Lee Anderson: I just wanted to go back to Abdulrazak for a moment. We're both foreign-born. In my case, a much earlier colonial subject living in the UK. I wonder how you view this recent tumble. The search for a new identity on the part of the Brits, with Brexit. We're seeing the advancing national sentiments in Scotland, the perennial ones in Ireland, let's see what happens in Wales. This recent death of the Queen has caused a kind of new exposure of, maybe, long-buried feelings about identity, about what the UK is, this rump of the old empire. In our lifetimes we've seen Britain go from being the master of the seas and the colonial power in a great part of the world, to master of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Pitcairn Islands, you know … I wonder how you're viewing that.

I think it's relevant, because we are seeing … I live among the British. Many of my friends, of course, are liberal. They're creative types and therefore feel guilt and shame about the colonial past, in some ways, because they grew up with that. That has informed their worldview and is almost the default position they take with regards to world affairs. They have no illusions about what Russia is doing and that Russia is also an imperial power today, in its own way. But they're seeing their own identity shape-shift around them, and nobody has quite come to terms with it yet. I wonder how you're viewing that process, how you're seeing it yourself.

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Well, that's really interesting. I never thought I'd arrive at a moment where I would be the one who's in a position to describe British identity. Anyway, things are happening, sure, but it might look rather more radical than perhaps it really is – in the sense that these things that are now coming to the foreground are not just recent; they're things that have been happening over a long period of time. You mentioned that the United Kingdom went from being masters of the sea, as you put it, to being masters of hardly themselves. But that process also has been going on for a very, very long time. There's a way of thinking that might say that by the turn of the twentieth century, the United Kingdom was already at its peak and beginning, therefore, going downhill in terms of world power and so on. It's just taking a very, very long time, I think, for some of these realizations to sink in. And maybe Brexit is another symbol of that. It seems to me that part of the impulse behind it was to say something like, 'We were once this, and we are no longer that.' And let's reclaim that sense of exceptionalism and of difference from our neighbours. And it seems to me it's a mistake to think like that, because what was happening before was an increasing identification of a larger consciousness. And Brexit seems to me to be kind of narrowing that possibility of consciousness.

But really, it's not a very interesting subject. I mean, I think it's something that's going to work out in the end somehow. It does seem to return to … I've been very interested in the way the conversation here has evolved from your opening remarks to the way we end up talking about safety of the individual – not just the future or safety of a community or a nation. And all of these are relevant. I think it's really good that the conversation is kind of rearranging in this way, because there are so many dimensions to acts of aggression like this, that not only reveal what, at times, seem almost incomprehensible, something evil in the desire of the Russian administration of the Russian Empire, but also show … I mean, I have to congratulate – one has to congratulate and admire the resilience and the refusal of the Ukrainian people to succumb to this enormous, overshadowing power beside them.

I wish one could see this sort of resilience and resistance repeated in other places which have recently suffered intrusions into their lives by powerful nations. So good luck to the Ukrainians. And if there is any further need to say, 'People need to know about the Ukraine,' then I think, to some extent, it's also up to the Ukrainians to tell the world about these things, like that film is trying to do. To say 'This is what's happening here, this is what we are, and this is our history that you don't know about; that we have been under this kind of perse-

cution for at least several centuries.' And I think there will be many people who will have the fellow feeling that may now seem to be lacking.

Jon Lee Anderson: I brought up Britain because I've often noticed that my British friends stumble over this idea of their national identity. Some say English, some say Scottish, some say British, but they can't really explain what British is anymore without an empire. And in that sense, I think there may be some kind of analogy with Soviet. I found your thoughts quite interesting when you were talking about your interrogation, Ihor, and what the interrogator asked you, what you were. So, I'm merely trying to find resonation between different people here on what is a national identity. In the case of the United States, we are a settler people. We dispossessed the indigenous. We evolved a national identity that was amnesiac about the old world and the past. In some ways, that saved us from some of the old sectarian battles of the old world. By and large, those sectarian battles are not fought in the new world, as new identities are being constructed. Jews and Arabs don't fight one another in Honduras or Brazil. People fight for other reasons.

So, it seems to be fluid, and sometimes identities can be forged or reforged in warfare. But other times, they're taken apart by the power in themselves and perhaps … It's just a thought, that was what I wondered – if what we're seeing in Britain is the final dismantling by hook or by crook of what was once a global empire. Olena, you have thoughts, please.

Olena Stiazhkina: [The philosopher] Taras Wozniak was here recently, speaking at a conference at UCU, and he said that Ukrainianness means activity [carried out] for the benefit of Ukraine. I really like this story. I really like the politics of this statement. In the end, I share this opinion. But I want to thank Lydia for the solidarity she has shown us all now.

Yet I want to go back – I can't help but go back to the question of: why are we invisible? Recently, Elon Musk caused a terrible scandal by Tweeting that it is necessary to negotiate [with Russia] and so on. But he made an interesting remark in there: that back in 1783, Russia conquered Crimea, and therefore Crimea belongs to Russia. This means that Elon Musk does not see that Crimea is the land of the Crimean Tatar people; that these are the Crimeans who lived there before the conquest by Russia, and after the conquest by Russia, and who were, ultimately, deported by Russia in 1944, when it threw these people out of

their own land, and now it is torturing these people. If Elon Musk had said that about the indigenous people of America – if he had denied their right to existence – then his company would have been ruined by a lawsuit for what he did. But it turns out you can do this to us – our Crimean Tatar people can be denied their existence. How did they do it?

If you know – and now I am addressing the international audience, using your example. You may know that 'Russki' – 'Russian' – is an adjective. What Russian imperialism does is absorb and dissolve other nations using this word. Russian–Ukrainian, Russian–Belarusian, Russian–German, Russian–Pole and so on. There were two basic concepts here – that of brotherly nations, and of one people. In order to become part of the empire, the second word had to be lost, that is, a Russian–Ukrainian is no longer a Ukrainian, just Russian. And we have to admit that they succeeded, because when the world – including the countries of Latin America and Africa – describe our [geography], they refer to us as Russians. The same happens with Georgians, for example, [and all] the peoples of the Caucasus.

How did it come to this? One can talk about Russification, assimilation … but mainly they achieved this through ethnocide and genocide. Above all, because of this. Because Russian imperialism always imitates the language of the West, it presented all these genocides there as the norm. For instance, the operation to exterminate Poles, or the Germans, then Koreans – it was presented to the outside world as a fight against spies. The genocide of Ukrainians, the Holodomor [famine], was presented abroad as a natural cataclysm and industrialization, as happened in England with enclosure 300 years ago. It presented the story about Ukrainian resistance in 1944 as [being] about Ukrainians who were helping the Nazis.

Ultimately, it worked, and here's how it worked: Europe believes that it was liberated by the Russian people, but among those Russian people there were 7 million Ukrainians in the Army. Europe still believes that the Russian people suffered [at the hands of the Nazis], but it was Belarus and Ukraine that were fully occupied. The Russian people are supposed to have suffered so much that the Soviets failed to see the Holocaust. It's not just that they failed to see it: they continued the Holocaust campaign, persecuting and shooting Jews – they did not even give them the right to suffer. They continue doing the same now. When they destroyed the Chechen people, they presented it to the outside world as fighting terrorists. And when they attack Ukraine, now, they sell it as a story of neo-Nazis, which, of course, Europe is afraid of, because it has lived through this tragedy.

And in the end, this is what happens: it turns out that on the basis of that imitated, invented story, the Nobel committee in its speech tells us a story about the brotherhood of Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians. But the next step along from 'brotherhood' is 'one nation', and this means that this second half must be destroyed physically. That's why Ukrainians are not visible. That's why we haven't said much, why we haven't made our mark. That's why Ukrainian Poles didn't say much about themselves. That's why, let's say, those people who live there now on the territory of the Russian Federation – they don't say anything about themselves. They are actually Buryats, but they are called Russians; they are Dagestanis, and still they are called Russians. Now they are carrying out ethnic cleansing of their own peoples, by bringing them here – but they are all Russians. And [somehow] it is our fault that we were not talking about this. We thought that it was self-evident, we thought that Russian colonialism was absolutely self-evident. But when Russian imperialism flirted with Africa, it did not seek equal relations, absolutely not. It saw it as an advance of empire, as a moment to battle with the United States. I want to say that had they succeeded there, you would have ended up with Russian-Angolan, a brotherly nation. And then the Angolan part would disappear – possibly physically. Thank you. [*Applause from the audience.]*

Jon Lee Anderson: Thank you. I was wondering – I think my original question was how to overcome this narrative. Is it enough for journalists to come to Ukraine and cover what's happening? Is it enough for us to sit here and talk about it as intellectuals in the BookForum? I know that your foreign minister made a visit to some African countries recently to try to counter the perceptions in some of those countries. I don't know how successful he was. Should it just be left to officials?

Olena Stiazhkina: I don't know about the official level, but I think the very fact that we are sitting here and talking about this is good. And we are talking about it and we will talk about it – we're learning from our own mistakes. And we admit it, it's true, that we thought we could disregard Russian imperialism, because we are already independent and we will be.

But let's talk about how we became visible. We became visible because we are covered in blood. When a person bleeds, everyone sees it. That is why I said that we're living on credit borrowed from the Armed Forces of Ukraine, because we are bleeding and we can talk about it while we are covered in blood. And we

should talk about it at every opportunity. And we need to talk with colonial peoples, because we've lived the same fate with them – ethnocide, genocide … With post-colonial nations, I mean. And I'll be honest, we haven't developed this language yet. We are now trying to explain ourselves to the Western world first. But I guess we are making a big mistake, because the post-colonial nations are a powerful source of solidarity, and I think this should be our next step, taken tomorrow.

Jon Lee Anderson: I'd never thought about that. Following on from Olena …

Ihor Pomerantsev: The powerful allies of Ukraine are primarily the United States and Great Britain. And the majority of post-colonial nations in Africa and Asia consider them usurpers and imperialists. What am I thinking? That it's all very complicated. Here we are reminded of Edward Said and Frantz Fanon. Said was the author of Orientalism. This is a book that accuses the West, the whole West, but especially the English and the French, of having created the Oriental image, the image of the East. It's more journalism than scientific research. Experts who analysed it found about 200 historical errors there. Some other experts found indirect quotations from the orders of the International Department of the Soviet Union Communist Party Central Committee of the 1950s. And I will remind you that this book, the epigraph of this book, is taken from Karl Marx.

Frantz Fanon was also a radical fighter for independence. He was a radical Marxist. He was even treated in Moscow before his death. It didn't help. But Frantz Fanon simply took Marxism, but substituted the proletariat for the peasantry. I think that Ukraine should not forget that it is a European country. If we compare some situations, colonial and imperial, then I think we should consider, for example, Ireland. This is the European experience of fighting imperialism.

Speaking of identification, once I did a radio show about the word 'love'. And all these different linguists could not formulate a definition of the word 'love'. There are two words for love in the Ukrainian language – 'kokhannia' and 'liubov'. Like and love. Why? Because love is fluid, it is different. It's like poetry. You can read a definition of poetry in the encyclopaedia, what is poetry, but all poets, since the Middle Ages, have been trying to find the right words – Coleridge, Wordsworth … Better words, in a better order, different definitions of poetry. Why? Poetry does not want to be defined.

And with this question of identification – it changes. It is also changing in England, for example. I started working for the BBC at the end of 1979. By the way, BBC is England's phantom memory of empire. It's a very big umbrella. When I started working there, it was at the Russian service, and my co-workers were not English. They could not write political comments. It was such a soft, velvety imperialist mentality. You're all young people, you probably don't remember, but in the 1960s there was a cult figure from the BBC – Anatoly Maksymovich Goldberg. He was a writer, he was a columnist, but he was British. And it was very important for the British that he was British and that he appeared on the English BBC as a broadcaster. So I happened to witness relics of imperialism in action.

I return again to the notion of identification. This is a dynamic, kinetic situation – identification. And Ukraine's chances are related to its wealthy and democratic future. And then we will all see it, and not only during the war, when it is bleeding, but it will become visible when it becomes a wealthy and successful country.

Jon Lee Anderson: Money talks. As a reporter, I've travelled, I grew up on books about parts of what used to be called the Third World. And I realized, belatedly, that they were almost exclusively written in many cases by British or French author–explorers and so on. In some countries it's persisted until quite recently – ten years or so ago I was interested in the birth of a new country in Africa, which was South Sudan. And I was looking for books that would give me some greater sense beyond the kind of journalism that I could find in archives or that had been written about Sudan and South Sudan, to grasp it better. And I found myself wanting. There were a lot of books about colonial administrators in the 1940s who went around shooting lions or dealing with tribal conflicts and that kind of thing. But very little from the country itself. So it's just a reflection of what you just said. I believe that you're right. In the past twenty or thirty years, we've seen more and more writers coming from the cultures themselves. It's taken a while. Latin America finally was able to begin to change its narrative – some would say even that's become a cliche – with the success of Gabriel García Márquez and his extraordinary oeuvre that he created over fifty years ago. *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* and the books that led up to it and the books that followed it. And of course, he coined a literary term, magical realism, which now a new generation is sort of struggling to overcome and to have their own voices and not only imprinted by his narrative. But before Gabo, before Gabriel Garcia Márquez, much of the history and literature available

to people elsewhere about Latin America was, you know – American adventurers, American storytellers. Travellers' tales and that kind of thing. Which, ultimately, I believe – and I'm generalizing here – left Latin America in a kind of tropical cliche. I think it's true of a lot of countries. And I believe that you're right, that it takes empowerment, both economic and other, for people to find their voice and to establish themselves in the world. And perhaps we're beginning to see that here in Ukraine.

On that note, I'm probably near the end of our time. I'd like to ask if there are any questions for any one of our guests from the audience here.

Audience member: We've been talking about how an identity is something fluid and something that can change. But to what extent can we tolerate that? Because right now, in Russia, we've seen this movement where – mainly the younger generation of Russians – they decided to take out the red colour from their flag, and they are saying, 'We don't want to be associated with that Russia, we are a different Russia.' But isn't that some sort of escaping [of] responsibility? Can we let them escape from that? Do we want them to still feel the consequences of being Russian and not acting sooner?

Jon Lee Anderson: It is a good question. Added to that, I think it's almost a quarter of a million – many young Russians – who've also fled to neighbouring countries. And I suppose the same question could be posed to them: what moral responsibility do they have, right? Who would like to answer that?

Olena Stiazhkina: I have an extremist answer *[audience laughter],* and you can probably guess it. But if we are being polite … We currently do not have the resources to think about what they should do and how they will live, wherever they are, whether they are good or bad or ugly. We don't have the resources. We have to admit it and focus on our own problems. Once we have time and inspiration, we may consider them, but not today. *[Audience applause]*

Jon Lee Anderson: Thank you, Olena. Somebody else?

Audience member: Yesterday evening Mr Harari talked about imperialism. And he gave ideas that I liked very much about digital imperialism, or data imperialism. He says that in the future expansionism will be on data control and data mining. Regarding issues of self-determination, regarding issues of self-consciousness that you talked about: Do you think something will change in this area, in this modern culture? Digital control over the person – we see it in regards to Uyghurs; we see it in the attempts regarding Russia-controlled territories of Ukraine. Digital imperialism and self-determination in this issue: how do you evaluate the prognosis? Thank you.

Lydia Cacho: Well, we were discussing this yesterday, actually. It's one of the most urgent issues that we have to address, obviously. Because it's not only the fake news and the narrative that, in this specific case, Putin is using, but also other world leaders are trying to impose the narrative and using algorithms to change our minds. And to change young people's minds, specifically. I think that a lot of us are investigating these issues, and trying to help young people understand how complex it is, and how we need to be more critical of anything we read or see.

But I also think that while we investigate this kind of data that is changing the way we see the world, or the way we think we understand the world, or specific events, what happens is that we are faced – especially young people, I'm going to talk about them because that's what I'm studying right now. They are facing a lot of fears. And the fears are just making them stop being more socially critical regarding certain issues, because they don't know how to handle them. We need to discuss this at schools and universities. And it's very hard because the control of information, the cyberspace, it's tremendous. That's the next biggest challenge for everyone, for every educator in the world. I will just finish by saying that I interviewed a group of young girls in Spain for a book I've just finished, and I asked them what their biggest fear was. And the first biggest fear for all of them was being raped. And the second biggest fear was that Russia would invade Spain too.

Jon Lee Anderson: I only have a small thing to add, which is that when I was in Ethiopia recently, the Prime Minister insisted that I tour their Artificial Intelligence Institute, and what they call their National Security Information Directorate. Two continuous buildings. I don't know quite why he wanted me to see this, but there they were working on their own digital encrypted communications

network. Eye surveillance through CCTV cameras, like China has. Drones, killer drones … everything you can imagine. And it made me aware that everything we read about what China does or that Iran or Russia does is being and will be emulated by those countries that have a strong national construct, and seek to build a strong security system within. This is going to have major consequences for the world going forward. It's not going to be a happy place in many countries. I think it's going to be a big challenge. I guess I agree with Harari.

Lydia Cacho: I need to say something, I'm sorry, because I just thought of it. As I told you, I investigate organized crime and I have investigated human trafficking for twenty years now. And one of my first trips to Russia was back when it was the Soviet Union. And I've been coming back for many, many years to investigate these issues. In the previous panel, we were talking about what can be done, eventually, and because of your question I just thought of this.

There is evidence of how Putin's government and a lot of powerful economic groups of the Russian oligarchs are directly linked to the mafia. And how the Russian government created this dark economy of money laundering that is immense and that is touching many, many countries in Europe. So I guess one of the things that we can also do – besides what they were talking about in the previous panel *[The Idea of Europe],* of eventually bringing him and everyone that created this invasion and the war to the international courts – we can also use these kind of mechanisms and tools to go after them for other crimes that are indirectly linked to war. And we have to do that. We have to investigate them as organized crime leaders, because they are. And as money launderers, and human traffickers, and as owners of the biggest empire in the world of sex trafficking of women from Eastern Europe. And we have to go into that – not only war crimes – because this now is part of a war crime, too. Thanks.

Jon Lee Anderson: Thank you. I think we have time for one more quick question.

Audience member: Thanks for the discussion. My short question would be: having an identity is partially about having something to present to the world and having some vision of the future – a project, or something. And my question is: for today, what identity may Ukraine have? Or how do you find or seek your identity? How do you answer that question? Thanks.

Ihor Pomerantsev: Can I answer?

Jon Lee Anderson: Yes, please.

Ihor Pomerantsev: I think I have my subjective answer. Russia for me – in general, every country has its unique culture with different elements. And the [dominant element] of Russian culture is death, there is a cult of death in Russia. Russia was the champion of Europe in killing its citizens and other ethnicities during the Gulag. And it can't be occasional. We are speaking about millions and millions. The cult of heroes, the cemetery of terrorists on the Red Square, all features of glorifying the death. And presently, the identity of Ukraine – (Yes, I switched to English, I'm sorry). Presently, the identity of Ukraine is to challenge death. And now Ukraine is life, the embodiment of life, the originator of life. That's why we support Ukraine, because we love life. Thank you. *[Audience applause]*

Jon Lee Anderson: Thank you very much. Thank you, Olena. Abdulrazak, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you, Lydia. Thank you all. And thank you Lviv BookForum and the Hay Festival for helping make this happen. It's a real honour to be here in Ukraine at this historic time for your people.

Propaganda

Participants: Peter Pomerantsev (Chair), Bruno Maçães, Philippe Sands, Andrii Shapovalov, Liuba Tsybulska, Emma Winberg
Pre-recorded video message: Maksym Skubenko

Peter Pomerantsev: Thank you, everyone, for being here. And thank you especially to the translators, in advance. Our conversation today is going to be a very concrete one. It's going to be about propaganda, about the Russian use of propaganda in this war. I want us to try and think about a very concrete question. Can we put the Russian propagandists on trial? We talk a lot about war crimes – we've been talking about them a lot over the last two days. But can we put the Simonyans, the Solovyovs, et cetera, on trial. That's what we're trying to work out today. Let me introduce my co-panellists.

Emma Winberg. Emma and her husband, James Le Mesurier, worked together at Mayday Rescue. That's the NGO founded to support the White Helmets in Syria. She was involved in studying and trying to find ways to counter the Russian-backed disinformation campaign against the White Helmets. And she's obtained a unique perspective on how the operations against the White Helmets were part of a set of wider Russian active measures.

Philippe Sands is a British–French barrister at Matrix Chambers and he's a professor of law at University College London. He appears before the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. And his absolutely amazing, Lviv-centric, book *East West Street,* on the origins of crimes against humanity and genocide, won the Baillie Gifford Prize. I think it's really one of the greatest non-fiction pieces of literary journalism I've ever read. Also, right at the start of the current invasion, he wrote a piece in the *Financial Times* calling for the creation of a special tribunal on the crime of aggression – for Russia to be held guilty of the crime of aggression. And that idea has really taken off. And now the Ukrainian government, I know, is promoting that idea.

Andrii Shapovalov is a professional journalist. From August 2021 he's the acting head of the Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine.

And Bruno Maçães is a wonderful intellectual: a Portuguese political scientist, but also a politician, which makes him so unique, both a practising politician and an ideas man. He was the Portuguese Europe minister from 2013 to 2015.

He's the author of many wonderful books, most recently *Geopolitics for the End of Time: From the Pandemic to the Climate Crisis.*

And here by video link, recovering from Covid – but looking amazing, even though she's recovering from Covid – Liuba Tsybulska, Head of the Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy.

Before we start, though, as is the tradition of this festival, we're going to have a thought-provoking video from Maksym Skubenko. He's the CEO of Vox Ukraine and the Head of VoxCheck. At the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he joined the Territorial Defence Forces of the Ukrainian forces in Kyiv. And he has a video for us.

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Maksym Skubenko *[pre-recorded video]:* Hi, my name is Maksym Skubenko, and I'm the one who knows about Russia propaganda. I'm the executive director of Vox Ukraine, co-host of the TV show *Countdown* on Suspilne TV channel, a member of the management team of the Kyiv School of Economics. And at this very time, a year ago, I received the Forbes 30 Under 30 Award, including for my main area of work: Russian disinformation.

For many years I opposed it in various ways and successfully *[pauses, sighs]* – yeah – revealed part of its destructive influence on Ukraine. But this is [for] the best, because since 24 February, I have been fighting, fighting, fighting and fighting against Russian martyrs on the front lines. And I see with my own eyes the reality that was largely caused by internal and external Russian propaganda.

Observing propagandists and their channels gives us a real cross-section of Russian society. This card shows us full support for the shelling and killing of civilian Ukrainians. Zombie ideas about Nazism, about fascism and faith in the street from NATO. And of course, direct calls for violence against Ukrainians. And not only that, but even threats to the whole world. The Russians drugged by the idea of danger from all countries, as the whole world are calling for the use of nuclear weapons. But we must note that the work of Russian propagandists is not just a tool for understanding Russia. Their work is also a significant element in the evidence base against Russia. And we need to use it. Let's recall that article that appeared on the *Orient Novosti* website a month after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. It was called 'What Russia Should Do with Ukraine'. This article became one of the clearest statements about the intention to destroy the national group of Ukrainians as such. What is this if not declared genocide?

Does the Russian propaganda contribute to crimes against humanity – to genocide against Ukraine – in other ways, by directly calling for these crimes? For now, the circle of propaganda is closed on the justification of aggression against a civilian population. For example, after the Russian attack on the centre of Vinnytsia, propagandists began to explain that in order to achieve their goals in the war, it is necessary to sacrifice civilians because this is how any war is fought. They [explicitly] admit it and say how many more Vinnytsias, Buchas, Kharkivs, maternity hospitals, shopping centres need to be [destroyed] for these Nazis to sit down as the negotiation table. Russian disinformation directly calls for even more radical – even more brutal – methods to force Ukraine to make all the consequences Russia needs. Russian propagandists no longer try to hide their crimes against civilians. They directly admit them. And, for example, as in the case after the attack on the shopping mall in Kremenchuk, they [explicitly] said, 'We hit where we wanted.'

But can we prove in a court that they are calling for genocide and crimes against humanity? All Russian propagandists can and must be punished if they publicly encourage or persuade other people to commit genocide. Direct and public incitement to commit genocide is prohibited by international law. For example, Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Moreover, public incitement to it can be prosecuted even if genocide is never committed. You cannot even allow the idea of the freedom of speech of propaganda. Russian faith can kill Ukrainian people. And Ukraine, in [summary], is a very, very sad example.

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Peter Pomerantsev: That was very, very powerful. And there are some words there which I think we'll be discussing a lot today. Actually, the word that may have slipped in there which I think we'll be coming back to is the word 'cause'. Causality will be one of the things we'll have to think about with a lot of detail.

So, very quickly – this is not a theoretical discussion. I'll tell you a bit about myself and why I came up with the idea of this panel. This is very much my initiative. My name's Peter Pomerantsev. I've written a couple of books which touch on propaganda and other things, but also I work at Johns Hopkins University and

I've been thinking of ways of how to fight contemporary propaganda. The legal way is one that I was always discouraged from pursuing. From 2014, I would go around Washington, where I now live, often with people who felt themselves to be victims of propaganda. With investigative journalists who managed to penetrate the Russian troll farm, who would go around the Senate [and] go around the State Department, and say, 'You have to start sanctioning Yevgeny Prigozhin and the people who work in the troll farms. Until they understand that this is punishable, they'll keep on spewing out this propaganda.' And the officials that they talked to said, 'Forget about it. This is freedom of speech. We do not touch it. Suing them? We won't even sanction them.' The Americans would not sanction Kiselyov. They would not sanction a lot of those people. Zhanna Nemtsova, Boris Nemtsov's daughter, went around Washington saying, 'Here is the list' – Solovyov, Simonyan, Kiselyov – of the people who encouraged and made possible my father's murder. They said, 'We sympathize, bye bye.' First Amendment, freedom of speech. Even the most abhorrent speech is still permissible.

Then this war happens. This latest iteration. February happens. And suddenly I get calls from lawyers. Lawyers who work in war crimes and humanitarian law. And they say, 'Peter, we'd like you to help us build a case. We think there is something qualitatively new happening.' And to put it very simply, the argument that we will be testing today is that this is not about freedom of speech. This is not about disinformation, which is not a legal category. If you want to annoy human rights lawyers or civil liberties campaigners, say the word 'disinformation' and they will throw you out of the room. It does not exist as a legal category. But the argument the lawyers that I'm working with are making is that we're seeing the integration of information in military operations that lead to war crimes. It's not about freedom of speech. It's not about disinformation. It's not about hate speech. These are all very, very hard-to-prove categories. It is about aiding and abetting war crimes. And that's what we're going to be exploring today.

Is that a way forward? Is that a way that we move out of this status of, 'It's about freedom of speech.' Can we delineate between freedom of speech and the role of information in war crimes. So the way I've built this, today, is really like one of those slightly commercial TV shows, where it's like – we have like a mock trial. So we're going to have a few case studies, examples, of this integration of information into military operations. And then we're going to have Philippe, who is a judge, a lawyer, a brilliant thinker in this space, really challenge and explore these case studies in depth. And I want Bruno to come in as well, who is a lawyer, apart from being a great writer and a politician, to think about these things as well.

I actually want us to start in Syria. I see Putin's wars as one continuous line. And Emma, you were deeply involved in one of the most – one of the first really, really glaring examples of a Russian campaign. And that was against the White Helmets, a humanitarian group in Syria. Why don't you tell us a little bit about that campaign and its connection to crime.

Emma Winberg: Hello, everyone. Yes, I think Syria becomes very relevant in this context, and in the context of the information-shaping that we see accompanying – and in fact being integral to – military operations. Arguably, we saw this being fine-tuned and honed in Syria from the point of the Russian intervention in autumn 2015. So pre-2015 – just to go back to the very beginning … I'd say, in about 2012, the propaganda machine on Assad's side really started ramping up. And it was predictable. It was echoing a narrative that had been in place for many, many years, and arguably all the way back to Hafez al-Assad's time, which was: 'It's us or the terrorists.' It was all about foreign intervention, foreign acts of provocation; [and the idea that] this was not a legitimate people's revolution; these were not peaceful protests, these were agitators. That was a narrative that they stuck with very closely.

In 2012 and 2013, as the regime started intensifying its bombing campaigns against opposition-held areas, and the war started escalating into something much, much more violent… At that point, emergency services collapsed completely, so people were relying on their neighbours to dig them out of collapsed buildings, providing ad hoc ambulance services, if you can call it that. Medical centres were being targeted across the country. At this point, my late husband James Le Mesurier saw an opportunity to train and equip and professionalize these local, community-based volunteers. There was no opportunity to provide lengthy training, so they were given basic training and sent back. But the effects were immediate and very clear. He called this work unimpeachable. They saved lives, whoever's they were. In fact, the White Helmets have saved the lives of regime soldiers, members of ISIS, members of Turkish intelligence and military. And while it's correct to say that they are not neutral, because it's very difficult to be neutral when you're being bombed, they were impartial.

What they brought to the table was not only providing these services, but they were also carrying helmet cameras and chest cameras. Largely, the purpose of these cameras was to enable us to remotely train them and improve the quality of their service delivery. But what they inadvertently did, as first responders showing up to the scene, was document the realities of the atrocities as they

were happening. So that was: bombing of civilian targets, which is a war crime, bombing of humanitarian facilities, and other such attacks.

Excuse me, sorry, I have a very dry mouth *[takes a drink of water]*. When Russia joined the conflict in October 2015, this changed materially. What we'd seen was targeting of White Helmets in double-tap strikes. Physical targeting. They were already being killed and they were already being called terrorists by Assad. But very few people bought into that. And in the West, the news around the conflict was being reduced to images of incessant pounding of cities, the type that we have seen more recently in Mariupol. But after a while there was a sense of, 'We've seen this.' People became inured to it and they started to turn away.

At this point, the media seized on these individuals – who then appeared increasingly – who were these White Helmets. And it wasn't just the White Helmets' own footage, but it was also local media who would show up, obviously, to be the first on the scene. And they would also capture these distinctive white helmets. At this point, something changed, and this is what we started to notice and feel distinctly on our own side.

From late 2015, the narrative was no longer Assad's propaganda, which had limited reach into the West. Suddenly, we started seeing the emergence of harsh Western, English-speaking critics starting to proliferate, largely on social media. But then, increasingly, on Russia Today. And then followed by Russia Today. And then being shared, retweeted and amplified by Russian officials. So we were observing this. First of all, we thought this was bizarre, because these Western commentators largely emerged from what we would call the anti-imperialist left. They were so-called pro-Palestinians, but bizarrely didn't seem to make any comments when Assad started pounding Yarmouk, the Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus. There was something that was incongruous about this whole thing. But, nevertheless, we started seeing the proliferation of these networks.

We notified our donors; they were government donors. We had funding from the UK government, from the Canadian government, the Dutch, the Germans and the Danes. And people essentially said, 'You know, we think the Russians have probably got something better to do.' And that was it.

But in 2017, there was a study commissioned to look specifically at these flourishing networks, because the nascent counter-disinformation community started taking a real interest in this. They thought this was absolutely bizarre and looked highly inorganic as behaviour. By sheer luck, the company that was instructed to do this research, Graphika, happened to have a dataset from a

previous piece of research that they had been commissioned to do around interference in the 2016 US presidential elections. And, bizarrely, what we found was that the networks were almost identical. The same platforms and the same networks who were sharing disinformation about the White Helmets were also those who were involved in interfering in the 2016 presidential election.

Why that's relevant to us, and to this debate around military targeting, is that disinformation around, say, vaccines is distributed and is designed to, for example, undermine trust in institutions. It reflects a general perception and a state and an attitude towards the current administration and – et cetera. And the similarity exists between military disinformation or military propaganda and political disinformation, because both of those two have one very clear objective that they seek to achieve, and that is either the victory of one's preferred candidate, or victory in the conflict. What we started seeing was, in fact, while most people have focused on the White Helmets and their documentary evidence as being the primary reason for wanting to undermine their credibility. And yes, it's true, because Assad's narrative was 'better the devil you know, than lots of other unknown devils' – of which the opposition, the fragmented opposition, was arguably very complex and difficult and atomized, difficult to explain. At the same time, we can also see that, in that argument, that starts to slightly crumble at a point when you have very tangible issues to hold the regime to account, such as war crimes, which had been demonstrated.

Yes, you want to make sure that the White Helmets are not a credible interlocutor. But also what you want to do is to make sure that there are no good guys in Syria, and therefore to try and prevent consensus forming around any intervention in order to make sure… Playing on all of the fears of the forever wars, the negative experiences and the damning experience, frankly, of Western intervention in Iraq, but also the ongoing (at that time) experience of Afghanistan.

All of this was designed to keep the West out of the war, and it worked. And that was ultimately the Russian objective. But by using by identifying this very pure, unimpeachable activity in a group such as the White Helmets, and labelling them variously – by the way, this is perhaps one of the great differences between Syria and Ukraine, because while the Russians use the term 'Nazis' in Ukraine, against the White Helmets they used a strangely incongruous group of titles or allegations, from 'organ traffickers', 'Al Qaida', 'Mossad', 'MI6', 'CIA actors'. They don't exist. It's all a propaganda effort.

Again, the point was not to actually make you believe any one of those, necessarily. But it was designed to just make you think there was something dodgy

going on. Which had a secondary impact, which was when government officials, from the secretary of state in the US or the foreign secretary in the UK, who are going out publicly declaring their support for the White Helmets… Well, if the White Helmets are dodgy, then how can you trust your institutions? And that was a much deeper Russian attack against our institutions back home.

Which brings me to wrap up this point, which is why this is so intrinsically relevant and why there is a call to action that we all need to heed, both here in Ukraine but also certainly in Europe. This is an attack against our societies, drawing on fissures and exploiting fissures in our own societies. And it has been going on for a very long time, weakening both our own domestic institutions and those institutions – I won't go on to talk in specifics about something like Duma, but the chemical attack in Duma, [and] the reason this has become such a lightning rod in the Syrian disinformation campaign is because that represents the legitimacy of the OPCW.

Peter Pomerantsev: Just so I'm clear: how did this coordinated Russian disinformation campaign, involving Russian state officials, electronic accounts and Western commentators… how did that then reflect on the safety of the White Helmets? Because what you're talking about here is the general perception. But was it also connected to their health and safety, and making them more vulnerable to attack?

Emma Winberg: Absolutely. I mean, it depends on the allegation. For example, I think what was perhaps the most threatening allegation inside Syria was that they might be linked, somehow, to the intelligence services. Given that this was a multi-polar conflict on the ground and they were operating in areas that were being controlled by extremist groups, this was certainly something that put the White Helmets at risk inside Syria. But what I think the broader issue is here, and what's interesting about the disinformation in Syria, is that most of it was in English. So it wasn't actually, really, designed for the Syrian audience in Syria. Everybody knew what was going on. You were polarized on one side or the other, but you knew. The point is: what made it so much more dangerous was it legitimized the attacks on the White Helmets, and 270 white Helmets have been killed on active operations. Between 500 and 700 have suffered life-changing injuries. That is a very high number when you think that, at the peak, there were 4,000 of them.

So, I think, if that goes to answer the question, I think this is a reminder that – you mentioned it when you introduced this – that this is about creating the alibi and allowing and enabling those violent acts that come subsequently. And it doesn't have to be linked directly to a single bombing or a single attack, but rather to a broader campaign, which is the particular risk in conflict.

Peter Pomerantsev: So, enabling – creating an alibi which the military then takes advantage of. Andrii, I wanted to turn to you. Tell me a little bit about the next stage of this, in some ways, which is Kramatorsk. Mariupol. And I think your colleagues at the National Security Council have been thinking about this idea of information being used as an alibi which precedes the war crime. Is that right?

Andrii Shapovalov: Welcome, everybody. Dear colleagues, dear panellists, if you allow me, I'd like to make a brief introductory speech [with regards to] fake information, manipulation, disinformation. I promise it will be brief. We have to understand that we are talking about the whole phenomenon that I would call informational terrorism. Disinformation is not a story by itself; it's part of the military operation of the full-scale invasion in Ukraine, which started on 24 February 2022. It is important to understand that all those propagandists are accomplices to the crime and an accessory to the crime. It's not about freedom of speech, it's not about values, it's not about virtues, because Russia distorted the attitudes of the civilized world to things that we consider to be human values.

Informational alibi is one of the components of informational terrorism and at the Center for Countering Disinformation, our organization, we're now working with scientists, we're working with academics, we're working with non-governmental organizations. We get advice from lawyers so that similar terminology or defined terminology can be used in Ukrainian law and international law in the future. That's our hope.

Examples such as bombarding a railway station in Kramatorsk, in Olenivka, a maternity hospital in Mariupol… These are some of the most atrocious crimes, appalling crimes, non-human crimes committed by the Russians – but they prepared informational background before that. Our Center has recorded and registered technical publications that were made prior to these terrorist attacks, in which they were trying to explain that Ukraine is trying to bombard

these places because there are a lot of Nazis gathering there. Anything but the truth. And all this was artificial. It was a synthetic story. And when we are talking about freedom of speech today, digital analysis is very important, because we have to record and register different special information operations, step by step. Nothing can be hidden today; everything is on the Internet. We know how information emerges, how a series of propaganda speakers were trying to disseminate this information, how they were trying to involve the audience, how they were gathering comments, what decisions were made by the military and political leadership of the Russian Federation, and what we saw was an outcome of this. If today we involve lawyers, experts, in discussing digital expertise, digital analysis, then we have a very short period of time when we can do this analysis and it has to be recognized by the legal circles worldwide.

We are talking about artificial intelligence that can provide the analysis of whether this attack is synthetic or organic. When we are talking about organic, then yes, we can talk about freedom of speech, about values. But when we can make prototypes, these days, then we see that they are synthetic. They are not organic. So it's all about AI and machine-learning technologies.

Peter Pomerantsev: I think there are some contiguities here, in these two cases. They both, to my non-lawyer ear, sound a bit like aiding and abetting. If this was a bank robbery, like the propagandists are helping the bank robbers drive up to the place, commit the crime, then driving them off again. They're facilitating. They're not the main cause, maybe, but they're part of a well thought through coordinated artificial operation. If we can show that they are aware this is an operation, that they are aware where this is leading, [and] if we can show that there is integration between the military and the media in Russia, which there is … do we have a case, Philippe? Is there something to work with there? Andrii, you wanted to jump in very quickly?

Andrii Shapovalov: I would like to add a brief remark, if I may. Today, the Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine is developing relevant maps. And we see how public calls to bomb civil infrastructure lead occupants to quote these messages, almost word for word, that they 'must kill civilians'. We know how they repeat these messages during their phone calls, intercepted by the Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine's Ministry of Defence. And when we superimpose one map on another, we see the

connection and the intersections of these maps are absolute. That is, it is not a coincidence.

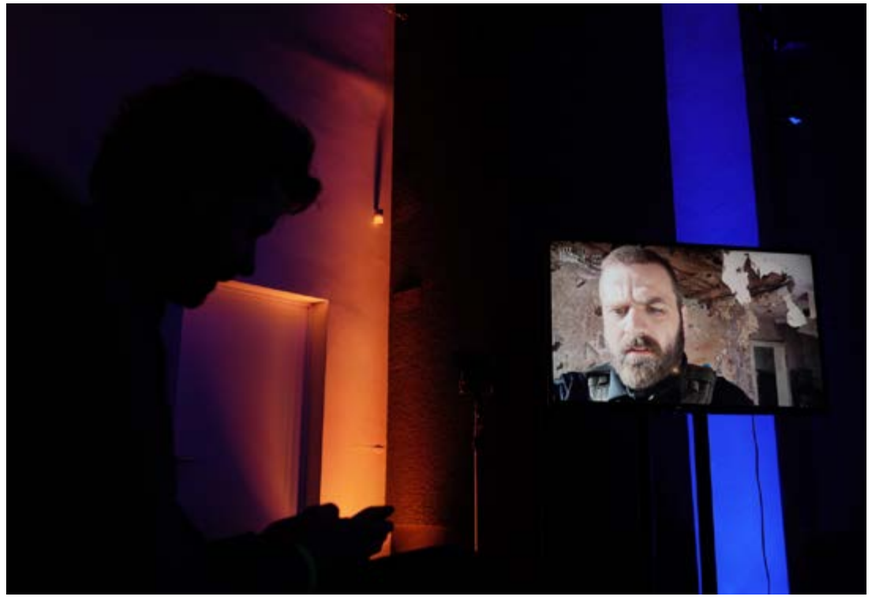
Peter Pomerantsev: This argument around alibi was used several times. Alibi, facilitating, aiding and abetting. Is that a legal path, to your mind?

Philippe Sands: First off, incredibly nice to be on this panel and thank you, Peter, and thank you to the organizers for inviting me. Second off, I'm new to both the examples, so I have not been pre-prepared on the substance of these issues. So my responses, necessarily, are broad and initial reflections – the lawyer's kind of caveat.

Peter Pomerantsev: Inching away!

Philippe Sands: I think the starting point is just to put this conversation in its broader context. It is well-established in international law that the association of an individual with the use, expression, of words can give rise to criminal liability. That is established. You need to look no further than one of the defendants in the famous Nuremberg trial, the first international criminal proceedings: Julius Streicher, who was one of the propagandists of Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Hitler, who was associated with publications like *Der Stürmer* and others. And he was a defendant at the Nuremberg trial, and he was convicted of crimes against humanity and war crimes, although he never picked up any arms, never shot anyone, never pressed any gas levers. And that was significant.

Peter Pomerantsev: But very quickly, on Streicher, as we're there – because I think Nuremberg is so important here. Streicher was the Gauleiter of Nuremberg. Streicher was at the Wannsee Conference, organizing the Holocaust. He was in the bunker. So he was clearly part of the conspiracy. Hans Fritzsche, the head of the Reich's radio, who would every day give a talk about how Jews were subhuman – his case was the shortest at Nuremberg, and it was completely dismissed, because he was just a guy talking with no power to coordinate. So there's two cases at Nuremberg. One of them gets the Solovyov off. The other one puts the Kiselyov on the hangman's noose.



Top (from left to right): Peter Pomerantsev, Philippe Sands, Andrii Shapovalov and Bruno Maçães
Bottom: Maksym Skubenko

Philippe Sands: Now, I was coming to that exact point. But in Streicher's conviction, his association with publications were part of the facts that caused him to be convicted. And I cite him simply for the proposition that it is possible by your association with words to be investigated, prosecuted, convicted and, in his case, sentenced to death for association with activities that fall within this broad definition of propaganda. The big 'but' is: the nature of that involvement is going to turn on the facts of every case. And if you have a case like Fritzsche, who was one of the three who was acquitted, you come to understand also that the mere fact of association, by putting material out without the associated – what the lawyers call the mens rea – the necessary mental intent to contribute to the acts that followed … it will be very difficult to prove that this person has crossed a line of criminality such that you could sustain a prosecution.

There is a second, more recent, set of cases in relation to Rwanda and the use of a particular radio station. But in that case the language was explicit and I was interested, Andrii, in what you said in terms of, 'Today we have to kill some civilians.' I haven't seen those documents; I would be very interested in knowing more about those documents in due course. But if you go on a radio station, which is listened to by large numbers of human beings, and you say 'Today's the day to kill the cockroaches,' you're in trouble.

So, the question is, where do you draw the line? And reasonable people will disagree as to where you draw the line. As you were both talking, I was thinking back to another exercise of propaganda in my life that had a huge impact. I often like, when I'm talking through issues like this, to imagine things that are not in your minds right now to create a point of comparison so that we all start asking ourselves the question, 'OK, fine.

We really don't like what's going on now, and therefore let's use the criminal law to stop this kind of thing.' But let's take another example. Let's take the example of February 2003, when a British newspaper, the *Evening Standard,* ran a headline in large font – almost the entire page – which said '45 Minutes'. You probably remember that. I remember it. I bought the newspaper that day and it was shocking. Because what came out of the British government's propaganda machine and – let's be frank, every government in the world operates propaganda. There is not a single government in the world whose voice I trust at face value on pretty much any issue. The question is, at what point does it cross the line? '45 minutes' referred to 'new information', quote unquote, obtained by the British government and the intelligence services that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction which could reach London on being fired within forty-five minutes. And it created a sensation. It was used to persuade a some-

what sceptical British population that the coming – in my view, manifestly illegal – war in Iraq, as terrible as the Russian occupation of Ukraine, in my view, was fine, was necessary. We needed to protect ourselves against these people.

So, taking these kinds of examples, who behind that headline would cross a line of criminality, assuming that the crime of aggression was created? In that particular instance, the deputy legal adviser to the Foreign Office resigned because she said this was a crime of aggression. Is it the editor of the *Evening Standard?* Is it the journalist who put the article together? Is it the person in whichever ministry – it was probably Number Ten –who basically coordinated the whole thing? Was it Alastair Campbell? Was it someone else who actually decided to, basically, lie? Because it turned out, as we now know, they had no such intelligence. It didn't exist. It was invented. And as a consequence of that invention, hundreds of thousands of people died who may not have died.

The question is, as we were discussing before, one of causality. Let's assume we've then found the individual who decided to spin this lie. Did that individual turn his or her or their mind to the question of what the consequences of what that act would be? [On the] radio in Rwanda – the guys who were on the radio knew exactly what the consequences were going to be. In your story, Emma, did the people who are putting that out turn their minds to what the consequences of putting out this information would be? In relation to the material you deal with, Andrii? I'm asking that question because that is what a prosecutor has to establish. Not merely that the individual was associated with the information, but [that they] knew, or if he or she had turned their minds to the question, should have known, that it would have these consequences.

So, it comes back to where we started. In principle, absolutely. Particularly, the modern world with technology and social media and various other things – the principle is there, and people who put stuff out should know that, in principle, as a matter of international criminal law, they are at risk of exposing themselves to charges of complicity, or aiding and abetting, or perhaps even worse. But a prosecutor will tell you it's not as simple as that. And so you need to do a very deep dive into the particular facts of the case and tease out the question, which will ultimately turn on whether the person who ultimately acted – the key person, not the subordinate – knew or should have known that it was reasonably foreseeable that the consequence of this act would lead to some of the terrible things that Emma is describing and that we're living through right now in relation to this terrible illegal occupation of Ukraine by Russian forces.

Peter Pomerantsev: The key word there for me was 'reasonably foreseeable'. So when a Kiselyov, a Simonyan, or maybe the news editor or maybe the journalists – I'm very interested in where you would draw the line there … when they are doing the story that in Mariupol hospitals there are Nazi fighters. If you can show that they had reasonable foresight that this would end up as an illegitimate attack on a civilian object, then we have a case?

Philippe Sands: Just to be very clear. I can see a case being made, absolutely. I was very interested in the documents that Andrii mentioned. And last night, over dinner, I was told about other material that I wasn't aware of – of some of the newspapers that are distributed and the local information that is distributed to gee up paramilitaries or local soldiers. Now, the production of that kind of material, on its face, appears to be designed to cause certain individuals to act in a particular way, including to kill, including to kill indiscriminately. The challenge in law and for a prosecutor is to join the dots. You're hearing me – I'm not saying it's impossible. I'm not saying it's easy, but it's possible. But everything turns on the particular facts and the evidence that you have. And so this gathering exercise that you're engaged in, [Andrii], is extremely important because the more information you can gather and the more you can draw up a composite picture – and it's always, in my view, best to avoid generalities, but dig in to one particular example and explain what actually happened in the run up to an act of killing in which, plainly, civilian people were targeted in manifest violation of international humanitarian law. And then show and unpick the context into how that happened. Then I think it becomes possible to imagine the ways in which you can expand the web of individuals who may be complicit in the acts of unlawful killing.

I've been interested in this not only in relation to the propagandists, the peddlers of information and disinformation, but I'm particularly interested in the people who provide the finance for this. Because it costs money to do this kind of thing. And what I'm interested in is who are the categories of individuals, and who are the individuals, who are actually providing the finance to allow this stuff to go on? So I would take it even a step further.

Peter Pomerantsev: That's very interesting. Bruno, I'm going to bring you in in a second, you've been very patient, but I want to ask Liuba one thing first. We've had two case studies around facilitation, aiding and abetting. Liuba, you've been – we've got to bring the G-word in: genocide. It was mentioned by Maxim, and

it's a word that I know lawyers have very, very conflicted opinions on. Philippe has written a book about the history of the idea of genocide. Liuba, you've been looking at genocidal rhetoric in Russian propaganda. Can you tell us a little bit about that and some examples, and thank you for your patience.

Liuba Tsybulska: Thank you so much, Peter, and I'm sorry not to be with you today physically; unfortunately, Covid is very bad at choosing its timing. Just a small correction: I'm the former Head of the Center for Strategic Communication and currently I'm an advisor to it. We are talking about genocidal rhetoric today, and I've been talking about this for many years – eight years approximately. However, the last seven months have changed everything. It became clear that if we do not draw a very clear line between where freedom of speech ends and the call for genocide begins, and if we do not punish those who made all these atrocities possible with their words, then we are in danger. And democracies are in dire danger, and nothing is true and everything is possible, Peter.

Bombing of schools, maternity hospitals, as you mentioned, and even cemeteries; deliberate attacks on shelters and evacuation routes; rape of women, men and children; the mass murder of unarmed civilians and burning of Ukrainian books and art pieces. These are implications of the consistent work of the Russian propaganda machine, and it's a result of the systematic dehumanization of Ukrainians. And we know that, in some cases, Russian soldiers explicitly justified their violence against civilians by referring to articles or TV programmes they saw in Russian media. And there is a lot of evidence of such rhetoric; here are just a few examples.

On 4 April, in Russian state-run RIA Novosti news agency, the pro-Kremlin journalist Timofei Sergeitsev called for the destruction of Ukraine's national identity and the campaign of brutal punishment of its people, and Maksym Skubenko referred to it. Sergeitsev called for imprisonment, forced labour and death for Ukrainians who refused to comply with the Kremlin's rule in Ukraine. On 5 April, Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian Prime Minister and President, currently Deputy Chairman of the Security Council, described Ukraine as 'a completely fake nation' and 'a copy of the Third Reich that doesn't deserve to exist'.

Then he went even further, and proposed to extend Russia from Lisbon to Vladivostok. On the programme of the well-known propagandist Vladimir Solovyov, one of the guests stated the following: 'Ukraine cannot be repaired. You cannot repair this construct. It has to be destroyed, as it is anti-Russia, an entity

that threatens Russia.' Another well-known Russian media figure, Anton Krasovsky, who led the RT media, said, 'This country should not exist, and we will do everything so that it doesn't exist. We will burn down your constitution.' And the former head of Roscosmos, Dmitry Rogozin posted in his Telegram that, 'If we do not kill them all' – them, Ukrainians – 'as our grandfathers didn't kill them, then we will have to die, but our grandchildren will have to pay even more. So let us better do it now.'

So there are many examples of such rhetoric since 2015, and now the Russian media is literally flooded with such cases, such messages. And in his book *East West Street,* which happens to be one of my favourites, Philippe Sands tells us that the world's legal system was not ready for new challenges – for all the atrocities committed in the Second World War by Nazi Germany, and that system had to be changed, and now it's time to change it again. Thank you.

Peter Pomerantsev: Liuba, thank you very much. The, sort of, soft examples, I mean, they're just non-stop calls for wiping Ukraine and Ukrainians off the map. Bruno, I wanted to bring you in. Thank you for waiting so patiently. But you've been thinking about this genocide question a lot. I'd love to know your opinion as a lawyer, but also as a as a thinker. But also, Liuba mentioned something at the end there, which I find fascinating. We're all looking at the examples of Rwanda, Nuremberg. We're all looking backwards. But the information world we live in is radically different. And do we need, really, a whole new set of categories to understand the nature of the threat?

Bruno Maçães: Yes, we do. I think both of us have been very interested in this question of how virtual reality and political reality are intersecting more and more. And in the end, this is due to the Internet, obviously. The Internet has created this artificial medium that mediates our access to reality and in many cases replaces reality. So we have to adapt even our thinking about criminal law and categories of criminal law to a world that is very different. And this has happened many times in the past. Fraud, as a concept, did not exist when people lived in a purely physical world. You have to enter a world of statistics, of public records, in order for fraud as a category of changing the public records to benefit yourself to become a category in law. And the same applies now. How exactly it applies, I think we're at the beginning – Liuba and yourself have said, we still don't know exactly.

But I think analogies are important and that's what you do in law school; you work with analogies. Your analogy, Peter, I think is excellent. The people that drive the bank robbers to the bank door, to the bank gates, and then the people that drive them away … the people that drive the robbers to the gate, I think are those inciting the crime. I don't think that's as useful a category here, because we're probably not inclined to thinking that the people in the Kremlin need to be incited. I myself am not inclined to think that they had innocent plans for Ukraine and it's Solovyov that is pushing them. So I think the interesting category here, the interesting analogy, is the people driving them away, the people allowing them to escape. The people transforming the crime into something innocent. The people transforming the bombing of a theatre full of innocent civilians into, potentially, even an act of justice.

By the way, Peter, I think this insults and offends our moral intuition more deeply than… These sorts of virtual crimes of changing reality insults our moral sensibilities even more deeply than a crime of passion. The husband that finds the wife with someone else, the most physical crime that you can think of. I think these virtual crimes are particularly offensive. Or Holocaust denial is another example. That not only are you committing the crime, but you are making the crime disappear. And if we don't do anything to respond to the strong moral intuition here, I think we're going astray.

Now, I would tend to think of these crimes of propaganda as part of the crime itself, as part of the crime of aggression or the crime of genocide or the war crime – not something to be investigated apart. They are a stage in the crime. Now, let me just, before I finish, give up an example coming from Western politics, because I think Philippe is right about this, that we can't just talk about Russia. I think the American forces in Afghanistan committed a war crime in August last year when they used the drone to bomb that family of innocents, probably under enormous pressure, but still they shouldn't have done it. And it was a terrible act to commit. But, you know, to answer Philippe's question, I don't see propaganda associated with it, apart from the usual characters in the neocon conservative think tanks in Washington, that were suggesting, 'Of course, it has to be a terrorist. Our troops would never do this if it isn't a terrorist.' And, you know, they quickly shut up. I didn't see anyone trying to transform this into something it was not. And eventually, of course, the New York Times won a Pulitzer for that, exposed the whole affair. And those who disagree with me that it was a war crime, they can read the *New York Times* story and make up your own minds. But I think there is a fundamental difference here from the Russian system and in this case, the American system. War crimes are committed, but I don't see the same operators being engaged into the crime itself. Am I being naive here? There are maybe counter-examples, but that's the most recent example I can think of, of a war crime committed by the US forces.

Peter Pomerantsev: To be clear, the principles that would be derived from a trial against Russian propagandists would then be applicable to anyone. Which is probably why, whenever my friends went around the State Department in the Senate, they were like, 'No, no, we're not touching that. It's about the First Amendment laws, it might be used against us.' I don't think that we need to get into that rabbit hole today. I think, clearly, if you establish the precedent with Russia, you'd apply it elsewhere. But, Philippe, I see two things from these two arguments and case studies. So, Liuba, about genocidal rhetoric and how that's connected to what we saw in Bucha, what we see really every place that's liberated – we see it again and again and again – the mass murder of civilians.

But also, Bruno said a very interesting thing there – the driving away. Can you charge someone for doing something post factum? Because a bit of my brain is like, 'But who's the victim then?' Or is the victim then reality? I remember [the historian] Timothy Snyder once pitching the idea that people had a right to a share in reality, that could be undermined by propaganda. But let's stick with the big G, genocide, and whether this sort of rhetoric could be connected to the crime of genocide.

Philippe Sands: Well, this rhetoric is horrible, and these are terrible things we are hearing. I think they are properly characterized as genocide, the rhetoric.

Peter Pomerantsev: Is that a crime already, just so I understand?

Philippe Sands: But it's not immediately apparent to me that that is a crime. And the problem that we have in this conversation is the following. There is an obsession with the crime of genocide. And the reason there is an obsession with the crime of genocide is that it is the only crime, when uttered, that is guaranteed to make the front page of every newspaper in the world. If an American president says that a genocide is happening in X or Y place as President Biden, in my view, very unwisely did in relation to this particular conflict? It goes straight onto page one.

If President Biden had said ‘crimes against humanity are happening’ or ‘a war crime is happening’ – if it were to be reported at all, it would be reported on page twenty-seven of half a dozen newspapers, and that would be it. And everyone’s realized that. Every victim before every international criminal procedure wants their crime to be characterized as the worst of all crimes. And that leads to a rush to genocide. Every government whose people are on the receiving end of the horror, for perfectly understandable reasons, want the horror that they have been subjected to, to get the maximum attention. And so, essentially, what is going on is there is an instrumentalization of the term genocide.

Now, we are sitting and meeting in the city of Lviv. Lviv is where the concept of genocide began. For those who are not aware, a young law student called Raphael Lemkin, in 1921, attending a class no more than 500 metres from where we are sitting, at the then-Jan Kazimierz Law School in the University of Lwów, today Ivan Franko University Law Faculty, had a conversation with his professor of criminal law, Juliusz Makarewicz, on a trial that was taking place in Berlin. In which the defendant was a young Armenian, Soghomon Tehlirian, whose entire family had been killed by the Ottoman Empire in Armenia. He assassinated one of the organizers of that massacre, and he was put on trial. And Lemkin, as a young student, says, ‘The wrong person is on trial. Talaat Pasha, the Turk, should have been on trial. And Makarewicz disagrees. And one conversation after another ensues. And eventually, twenty-five years later, Rafael Lemkin, from that classroom to Washington, D.C., invents the concept of genocide. It emerges at the very same moment that another concept emerges: crimes against humanity. Also, unbelievably, invented by a student in this city, in Lviv. You literally could not invent the points of comparison. And crimes against humanity and genocide have operated in parallel.

My own view is the crime against humanity is as bad as a genocide. So my response to the totally understandable outrage that’s being expressed by this kind of language is to, with the fullest possible respect – I think my solidarity with Ukraine is very well known and very clear – to focus our efforts on those that are most likely to cause the perpetrators of the crimes that have happened to be brought to justice. On the basis of the evidence I have seen, which is not so much beyond what’s in the public domain, I can tell you it’s going to be very hard to sustain a genocide case in relation to the horrors that are happening in Ukraine.

Bruno Maçães: *[interjecting]* But why is…

Philippe Sands: *[continuing]* Frankly, it'll be impossibly difficult because Lemkin's original conception of genocide, which would encompass the things we are seeing today, was not agreed to by states in 1948 in that convention. They set a legal definition of genocide, which set an unbelievably high bar, making it almost impossible to prove that an act of genocide in law has happened. And what has emerged in the years between '48 and today is a growing divergence between popular conceptions of what genocide means – doing really nasty things to a large number of people because of their identity, the popular conception – and the legal conception, establishing an intent to destroy a group in whole or in part, and then acting upon it in relation to one of the categories of acts.

So, I completely support that these utterances should be brought, if they can, into a criminal framework. But let's not get obsessed about the concept of genocide, because it is a distraction. And ultimately, the people of Ukraine will be disappointed when an international court says, 'Actually what's happened is terrible, but it's not a genocide.'

Peter Pomerantsev: For the layman here, firstly, you're saying Lemkin would see this as genocide?

Philippe Sands: Yes…

Peter Pomerantsev: So in Lviv it's a genocide. We can call it a genocide here, Lemkin approves.

Philippe Sands: But Lemkin's definition – you've got to be clear about this. Lemkin's fundamental conception about genocide was that it was a cultural thing. It was the intention to destroy cultural identity. And so for him, acts which would be, for example, targeted at destroying Ukrainian identity, was genocidal. Just a curious anecdote: Lemkin is banned today in Russia, because Lemkin characterized the Holodomor as a genocide, and therefore he is a banned person. Curiously, however, because the Russian machine is not perfect, East West Street is published in Russia, so people can read as much as they want about Lemkin. But the point is, he had the bar much lower.

Peter Pomerantsev: And it was raised. I want to come back to how it was raised, but Bruno wants to jump in, and Emma. And Liuba, I don't know if you're signalling over there – but Bruno, you had wanted to add something, I think.

Bruno Maçães: But we just heard the quotes that Liuba had from the president of the National Security Council. And it would be easy to find quotes from Putin himself where he announces a plan to exterminate Ukraine as a nation. Is it not being acted upon? It's being acted upon every day. What else do we need to prove that it is a genocide? You might want to say that it is attempted, but the reason it is attempted and not realized is the Ukrainian Army, otherwise it would have been realized.

Philippe Sands: I could point to the same language being used by Serbian leadership in relation to the Yugoslav context. And successive courts in that particular context ruled that those individuals were not, in fact, right to be done but for genocide.

Bruno Maçães: But, Philippe, that's a different question. Courts are wrong many times, and particularly international criminal courts, almost all the time. But that doesn't mean that conceptually, politically, symbolically, I mean – would Ukrainians prefer that we don't even call it genocide or that we take it to court and we lose the case? I think it would be better to take it to court and lose the case and potentially with bad judges, potentially with corrupt judges, than not to raise the …

Philippe Sands: Bruno, you are so wrong on that. I litigated for fifteen years the case of Vukovar. Some people here know what happened at Vukovar, where large numbers of Croats were taken out of a hospital and were executed pursuant to words of a similar character by the Serbian leadership. Successive international courts ruled, 'That is a crime against humanity, that is a war crime, that is not a genocide.' And the consequences of that ruling by the ICTY and then the International Court of Justice have been catastrophic, because the consequence is that an entire country believes a wrong has been done to it by comparison to the genocide that was found at Srebrenica in relation to the Bosnians. And that has created extremely negative feelings which continue to

persist today. So I would invite you to think more carefully about the language that we use and the strategies that we take. And think about the long term.

The long-term issue is the crime of aggression. That is the biggest issue on the table. The dozen or so people who launched and waged a manifestly illegal war against Ukraine and from which all the other crimes follow. And that is a slam dunk to establish. Why get enmeshed in the genocidal issue? I understand the feeling of a community to have the right to exist is vital, and the fact that some other community is trying to extinguish your right to exist is deeply offensive. But if you're not going to be able to prove it in law, why expend the energy and the effort when there is a much easier path to getting justice?

Bruno Maçães: Very, very quickly. I am not Ukrainian, so it's not that my feeling is part of the Ukrainian communities being offended. It's actually my feeling – as Peter was very nice to call me a man of ideas – it's my feeling as a man of ideas, because what is happening is a genocide. And I feel that I have to call it by the right name. That's the problem for me. It's not an emotional issue at all. It's very intellectual, actually.

Peter Pomerantsev: I wanted to turn to Emma, but I have a question as well. Is there any way you can briefly summarize why in Vukovar they said it's not genocide. What is this magical line that has to be crossed?

Philippe Sands: The magical line that has to be crossed is proving an intent to destroy a group, in whole or in part. In the period 1939 to 1945, senior Nazi leaders made the significant mistake of putting on paper what they intended to do to one or more particular communities, and that became evidence number one.

In all the subsequent crises, you are left to infer intent by a pattern of behaviour. So what you would have to do in this case, and I accept your point entirely on a political definition of genocide. Absolutely. But explain to people that there is a difference between a political definition of genocide and a legal definition. And so what you would then have to show is that these were not expressions of aspiration, these were not broad political statements of anger. You'd have to show a connection – and it may be that Andrii has the material to show that connection, somehow, I doubt that material is there – that there is a connection between the words uttered and instructions issued from those same people,

which then lead directly to Bucha. Now, if that exists, then yes, absolutely. But I doubt…

Peter Pomerantsev: OK, so it's about the plan. So, given how penetrated the Russian system is, given that we know there were plans to – leaked by the US government – to go into towns, to execute people, to create camps. This was all leaked, remember, beforehand by the US government. Maybe Biden does know what he's talking about. But Emma, you wanted to jump in?

Emma Winberg: Actually, my question is a slightly different one, which is going to draw us away from this discussion on genocide, in fact, into something quite different, just because…

Peter Pomerantsev: I was enjoying it. Enjoying is the wrong word.

Emma Winberg: So what we've seen is… The Syrian propaganda network, the disinformation network, was very established as a platform and received a lot of support from RT Sputnik and the rest, internationally. When they were censored, if you like, or shut down in Europe, there's been a vacuum in the English-speaking media for the Russians. It hasn't been as powerful in terms of applications as we might have expected. But these guys are suddenly reappearing now, suddenly in force. In the last month they've become much more active. The exact same voices that were so vocal on Syria are now starting to comment on Ukraine. Most interestingly, a number of them participated in the sham election monitoring. And that's interesting because that's also a kind of propaganda, isn't it, that's legitimization of something. And if we're talking about should they reasonably know what will come of that? We know that there has been forced conscription. We know that in those areas, there's desire to eradicate Ukrainian language, cultural side.

I mean, you've got both those things. You've got one which is going to directly put humans in harm's way – likely to be killed by the Ukrainian Army. And these are Ukrainians. And those people are going out and propagandizing. They are going out both and publicly and using the messaging – they're driving the car. They're also now providing the justification for it legally. What we're seeing is one of

the – a French MEP, Nathalie Loiseau, has created a petition to have these people sanctioned. But sanctions is politics. Again, that comes down to politics. Is there a legal basis for seeing this as a criminal act? And is there something that can be done, in particular, around those individuals who are now crossing over from what is essentially hate speech and potentially incitement or encouragement to violence, and actually going and putting their names on paper and providing the justification for a legal process of an illegal annexation of parts of Ukraine?

Peter Pomerantsev: Just to be clear, for everyone here: there are Western observers and commentators who are very involved in Syria who are now commenting on Ukraine, on Russia's side, but also going to the occupied areas of Kherson and legitimizing the sham elections. Just so that's clear for everyone. Are they responsible in the war of aggression? Is that the question?

Philippe Sands: I think it comes back to what we said the beginning. Yes, in principle, if you can join up the dots and you can show a connection between the expressions – spoken or written or otherwise communicated – and actions on the ground. If you can link up. And that's why I keep coming back to you, Andrii, because I was so interested by what you said about what's going on behind the scenes in terms of the gathering of material, the use of technologies to obtain material, the use of lawyers to understand points of connection in timelines between when things are happening. I'm not privy to all of that material, so I don't know what you've got. But the simple answer is in principle, yes, this should be explored.

Peter Pomerantsev: So I think this opens up, as we move towards the climax… I'm sort of torn in two directions, because a bit of me – as I said, this is not a theoretical discussion. There is now a team of international lawyers who are putting together the concept for this case, and this discussion will feed into our thinking. So part of me wants to start thinking, OK, what are our next steps? Where should we start to push towards? Where would be the courts that you present this evidence. But also I'm aware there might be questions from the audience.

But Andrii, you're part of the government. How would we move towards doing something? We've talked about the complexities. I think Philippe has described how deep the evidence is. I am actually very hopeful that in a world of hacks, leaks, interceptions, that evidence is much more abundant than it was in 1939. But how would you move towards a case? And Andrii, what would be your first case? If there's a first case you would want to bring? What would it be?

Andrii Shapovalov: In this case I'm talking about generalizations. But if we're talking about genocide or bringing Russia to justice, I think this isn't a question of this for this discussion, because we're talking about propaganda. We've been talking about what affects – those who affect particular crimes, or the perpetration of particular crimes. And this is where we have the biggest gaps, legally speaking, because there is absolutely no understanding – or there is no understanding that these people are perpetrating a crime. And if this is not described as a crime, then there is no crime. Forget it, all right? Forget Kiselyov, forget Simonyan, forget all those other little monsters who essentially instigated the war. I'm sure this is the discussion that we have to start: that in the world of the Internet, in the modern world, these people are the same sort of combat units as those who have killed in Bucha, in Irpin, in Hostomel, in Izium and in all the other towns,

I myself was born in Luhansk, and from 2001 I was working as a journalist, as part of the information space. And I saw the formation, the path of the genocide of 2022. This is again, this isn't an organic story. This is a synthetic, artificial story. It's a story that the Russians have taken years to implant and to deepen in the body of Ukraine, and which exploded in 2022, erupted in a full war. This is what we have to start a big discussion on, involving the best lawyers, international lawyers, civil society and all of those who have to do with combating disinformation.

Now, if this is done, if Ukraine does this today, we'll have a vaccine to stop this rot from spreading all over the world. Otherwise, the example of the Russians is quite contagious. There are a lot of little tinpot dictators who would love to do the same thing and who would love to play at ruler of the universe.

Philippe Sands: Just to come in. Andrii, as you as you know very well, and others in the room will know, but I just want to be very clear, for those who don't know. Ukraine has done incredibly well. Ukraine went off to the International

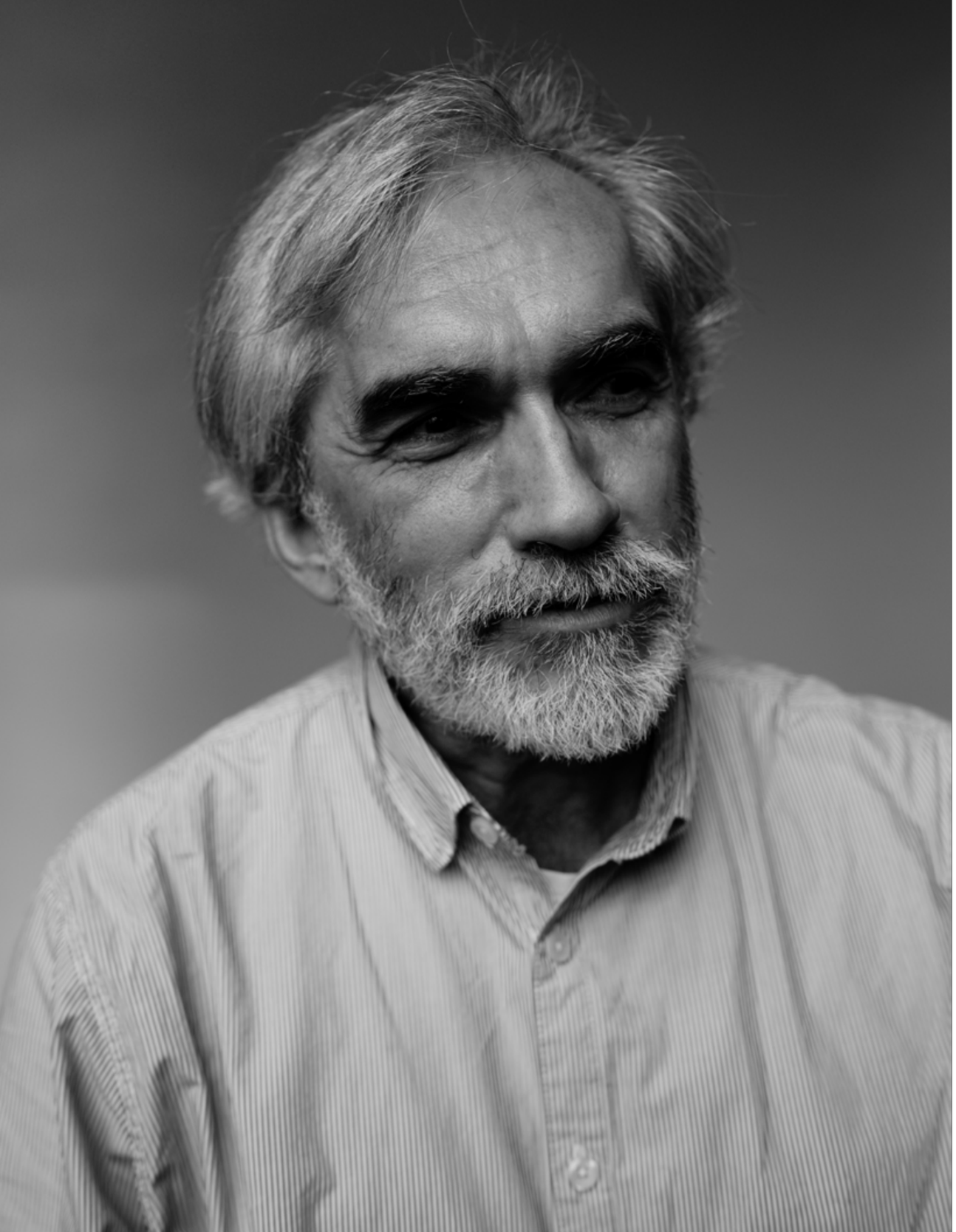
Court of Justice and in very short order, got a very far reaching, binding legal judgment by the International Court of Justice. It's called a provisional measures order. That Russia's claimed that a genocide was happening was a complete nonsense, and that has completely destroyed the argument. Ukraine has played an extremely effective legal set of arguments over the past seven or eight months under intensely complex circumstances. And I think the idea of opening up the space now and finding ways to ensure that the outer circle of individuals who are associated with enabling what is going on, whether it be bloggers or financiers, is an important space now to start to explore in the new world in which we live. I mean, I think this is a really important message from this panel.

Peter Pomerantsev: We only have three minutes left. Liuba, are you trying to say something, and am I censoring you?

Liuba Tsybulska: Yes, I was trying and, unfortunately, I cannot interrupt you. I'd just like to give a very brief comment and I'd like to refer to what Philippe has said on intent; that we have to prove that there is intent. Look, we clearly see that they know what they are doing. When Bucha happened, they only escalated. They only increased the amount of such rhetoric, the amount of such messages. It's not something that surprised them. Russian propaganda people give a feeling to Russian people that they have a right to come and kill Ukrainians. And the first thing they do when they come and occupy our cities, they remove and burn Ukrainian books, they forbid to speak Ukrainian, and they kill the most active people in the community. They kill basically those who are the carriers of Ukrainian identity. And when Bucha happened, those units, they were rewarded. They were not judged or prosecuted somehow. So it proves that they actually are proud of what their forces are doing in Ukraine. And for me, it's to be honest, it's a bit surprising and even fascinating: when we speak about the genocides of the past, we can never understand how come the civilized war world couldn't stop it in time. But now, when we see the genocide in progress, we start speculating. And we see there is a lot of evidence. And if we have to change the legal system, as has happened back in the past, then maybe we should start doing it. Otherwise, again, it's going to be very dangerous for other nations as well.

Peter Pomerantsev: I think that's a very important thought to end on, especially where we are. Phillipe, you've referenced this: we're sitting in the city which

produced the two geniuses who redefined the legal space and gave us new categories through which to understand the world. And it's been very evident from this conversation, which is why I wanted to start it in Syria – it is focused on Ukraine, this question of propaganda and its legal culpability, but it was there in Syria. We could have talked about Burma. We could have talked about many, many other examples. We didn't talk about ISIS. Something has happened – Bruno writes about this so well in his books – the information environment has been transformed. And maybe again, Ukraine can be the place where the new categories, the new legal concepts emerge that help to define good and evil and set the standards for the world. Maybe that is one of Ukraine's many destinies. Thank you very, very much. That was really, really interesting. And thank everybody for being here.



Hope, Humanity and War

Participants: Yaroslav Hrytsak (Chair), Margaret MacMillan, Serhii Plokhy
Pre-recorded video message: Anton Drobovych

Yaroslav Hrytsak: It is my honour to welcome you to this panel on 'Hope, Humanity and War'. We are joined by two of the world's most distinguished historians, Margaret MacMillan and Serhii Plokhy. I can always start with the fact that such people do not need to be introduced, but I will say just a few words about our guests today. Margaret MacMillan is a very famous scholar who works as a professor at the University of Oxford and University of Toronto. She has written many books, most of which are related to the international history and international relationships of the twentieth century. Her most famous book is Peacemakers, about the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and she's also written a book on the meeting of Nixon and Mao. She won a lot of prizes for that book, and if you are going to talk about the war, I could hardly find anybody better than Margaret MacMillan. Most unfortunately, her name is not that well known in Ukraine. I just checked Wikipedia and Google. There is no Ukrainian translation of many books that Margaret authored, and we're looking forward to the Ukrainian translation. But there's one fact which I would like to share with you: if you don't have the chance to read Margaret's book, do listen to her book, or to her series of lectures, called the Reith Lectures, of 2018 – it's available on the BBC. They're five lectures which served later for her synthesis of the global history of the war, which probably is the best perspective of what war is in human civilization. I very much encourage you to listen and then to read her book. And one final fact, a personal touch: Margaret MacMillan is, on her mother's side, great-granddaughter of David Lloyd George, the [British] Prime Minister, who was very much related to international relations.

Our second guest probably doesn't need specific introduction in Ukraine, because he's born in Ukraine, he's spent half of his life in Ukraine and now is a distinguished professor of Harvard – probably the first Ukrainian who managed to become a Harvard professor, Serhii Plokhy, who wrote many, many books. Amazingly, he produced approximately, on average, one book per year. I don't know how he does it, because it's not just the kind of the numbers of the book, but the special quality of the books. And those books … He started as a historian of the Cossack period, but nowadays he moves more and more to the history of the twentieth century. And his books, all of his books, directly relate to the topic of our discussion.

So let's welcome them to our panel. *[Audience applause.]* And I would like to thank you both for your consent to be here. But before we start our discussion, I've been told that we have a very important video. As you probably know, nowadays in Ukraine we are not discussing any more historians and war, we're discussing historians at war. And so several historians are now on the front line. To tell you just – all of my PhD students, they volunteered from the first day. And we have a special, really special, guest, Anton Drobovych, the Director of the Institute of Historical Memory. He is now serving on the front, he's a professional historian, Director of the Institute. And we have a video with him. So if I may ask to start this video.

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Anton Drobovych *[pre-recorded video]:* Hello, my name is Anton Drobovych. In peacetime I am the Head of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, and now I serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. I would like to thank the organizers of the event for the invitation, and in general for raising such an important topic, because the horrors of this war really pose many questions for us whether – having lived through all this inhuman experience – we can still have some hope for the future, whether there are really grounds for optimism. In my opinion, there are such grounds, because even the very fact of this war highlights several fundamentally important things.

First of all, our readiness to stand for the most valuable things in the world – human dignity, freedom, things that we call European values. And we do not stand for it in theory or with some slogans in the stands. We give our lives in order to be ourselves, in order not to lose our freedom. This gives many reasons for optimism, because this fight gives strength to a great European nation, which has passed a full, very long way to itself for a thousand years. And that is why the country that we shall build after our victory will be a great, strong European country of freedom. A country that will have a chance to start many things anew. A co-community that will have a chance to conclude a new social agreement, being aware of the value of the things enshrined in the constitution, realizing the value of mutual understanding and trust. Therefore, I personally have no doubts that there will be much more good on that side of victory than in the previous stages.

The second point I would like to make is that we already see a number of such elements of hope now. Everyone is talking about Ukrainians. Ukrainians are winning world prizes, Ukrainians have come out of the shadow of great imperial nations, which used to subjugate not only Ukrainians, but also other neighbours. Just recently, just a few days ago, we received the first Nobel Prize – the Nobel Peace Prize, which was awarded to our human rights activists. These are all very optimistic things. It is very encouraging because we finally have our own voice. And someone says that the Ukrainians have been working towards this for a very long time. No, I want to tell you that, perhaps, even compared to some other nations, we went through this path quite quickly. I won't say that we were the fastest, but we were lucky enough to preserve ourselves under incredible conditions, to be consistent, not to crash, not to lose our language, not to lose our identity.

Therefore, I think that we have every reason to build this new country, to have our say in the world. And also having gone through all these problems, all these challenges that we felt, we can provide support to other people, weaker nations who follow this path. We can discover our additional mission in this world, it is possible to help other nations – of course, only if such help is needed. Actually, this courage, this integrity, sensitivity to values, openness to changes, ability to learn even under extreme conditions – all these things inspire hope and optimism. Well, and it is also multiplied by the great attention of the world, the great trust of the world, the admiration shown to us by other nations – they give every reason to hope that after our victory we will build a more beautiful, fairer, kinder world, a more just community. A community that will value its people even more, a community that will value opportunities even more and live not only in its past, which is also important, but will also make big plans for the future. Plans where a person and his or her dignity will come above all. Thank you for your attention.

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Yaroslav Hrytsak: I think it was a very good start for opening our discussion. And my first question goes to Margaret. Margaret, some ten years ago, you made a very accurate prediction that in some ways we are in the period before 1914, before the start of the First World War. Looking back to the past, do you think that there was a chance to prevent this war?

Margaret MacMillan: Yes, I think there's always a chance to prevent war. And I think if you look at the period before 1914, there were crises, there were times when war was talked about. There was a crisis over the annexation of Bos-

nia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary. There were two wars in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913. There was the crisis over Italy attacking the Ottoman Empire in 1911. And there was talk of war. And yet somehow, through luck and diplomacy, Europe avoided a major war. And there were, I think, very strong forces pushing for peace in Europe. The period before 1914 was a period of tremendous international building of institutions, building of norms. And the whole concept of international law is really something that developed in the nineteenth century, markedly. Big disarmament conferences at The Hague. In fact, the third one was meant to be held in 1915, but for obvious reasons was not held. Peace unions, peace movements … I think there were a lot of people in the world who felt that war was something that humanity should and could move beyond. And I think there was also hope. We now know it was wrong [to think] that because the economies of Europe were so closely intertwined that war did not make any sense. And I think because the war happened – it's always a danger in history – we tend to think it was bound to happen.

What we do as historians is we often look for causes, and so we don't take into account other possible ways that things might have turned out. And I think what also helped to make the war in 1914 was the decisions, often by a very few people, or by elites, who thought they could use war, who thought they would achieve something by war. And I think, and I don't know what you think, but I think more and more we're realizing, with the war in Ukraine today, how important those in power can be. If they have tremendous power, if they have the ability to take their countries into war or not. I think it's quite possible, and I'd like to hear very much what Serhii Plokhy has to say about this, that without the presence of President Putin in Russia, that might not have been a war on Ukraine. And I think in 1914, those in responsible positions in Austria-Hungary and Russia and Germany, and to a lesser extent in France and Britain, could have prevented the war and for various reasons, chose not to.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: I have the same question for Serhii, but slightly rephrased. Serhii, you wrote three excellent books on the – if I may say so – on the apocalypses: on the [Cuban Missile] Crisis, on Chernobyl, and the fall of the Soviet Union, like three Armageddons that were averted. Did you, as a historian, have a feeling that we are heading once again to a new apocalypse? And what could these histories of triple apocalypses tell us? Can they send us a strong message?

Serhii Plokhy: Well, thank you for this question, Yaroslav. And, it's a real pleasure to be here, even virtually, with you and with Margaret MacMillan on the same panel. Margaret, I just told her that she was an inspiration for me, and [my] book on the Yalta Conference was really inspired by *Paris 1919*. So I'm really, really honoured to be on this panel. Honoured, also, for different reasons. Historians now in Ukraine write history in more than one way – not only by writing articles and books, but also fighting on the front lines. And what the publishers and the readers are doing is really amazing. In the middle of war, under the bombs and under missiles, the editing is going on, the publication is going on. So I salute the resilience of Ukraine, Ukrainian people, but also our colleagues – historians, scholars, publishers, booksellers. So it's an important event, and I'm pleased to be here.

Going to the question, I certainly look at the current period in the history of Ukraine, in the history of the region, in the history of the world, as the period that really is part of the process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. That the Soviet Union didn't fall apart in 1991 – the process of falling and disintegrating apart just started with Gorbachev's speech in December of 1991. So from that point of view, at least speaking about the frame of what is happening today, I wasn't particularly surprised. But I was surprised by the timing of the attack. I was surprised by, certainly, the absolute ferocity and barbarism that this war brought. As historians, I can say we're supposed to look [very] closely and take [very] seriously what Putin was writing when he published his essay in July of last year. Because, really, in my circles, or among my friends, historians in Ukraine, that was considered to be a joke.

And it was a joke on the level of professional history writing, thinking about history, understanding history. But the important thing was, as Margaret just said, that we have in Russia a particular regime, a particular form of government, and it generated enough support within Russian society itself, that allows an individual, after spending two years in isolation – Covid isolation – and figuring out the ways he can enter the textbooks, history textbooks. Then launching that kind of war.

So the short answer to what I just said: I wasn't surprised, particularly in terms of the broader processes that are happening, but in terms of the timing and the ferocity of the war, it was a big and unpleasant surprise.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Andrey Illarionov, who is a former counsellor to Putin and knows him very well, he moved to the United States and he made this prediction

– a prediction or, kind of, suggestion – to Ukraine; that we should take this July speech of Putin's very seriously. Because every time Putin delivers this kind of speech, aggression would immediately follow. It's not about the history, is about the prediction of what would happen. And talking about predictions *per se,* that's my question, also, about prediction, to Margaret. You wrote that the future war would be the war of the new dimension, the war of the cyberspace, with killer robots, the *Terminator*-like war, so to speak.

And what we see now, it's another surprise, that this war is very much a conventional war. It's mostly with artillery tanks, very much like the First World War or the Second World War – and this ferocity that Serhii just mentioned. So my question is, what happened? Where do we place this war?

Margaret MacMillan: Well, I think I was wrong, partly, and I think a lot of us were. But I would, too, like to say how honoured I am to be taking part in this and how impressed I am –well, I've been impressed by the response of the Ukrainians in so many ways. But I'm impressed by the willingness and indeed the eagerness to reflect on what is happening, which I think, when I look at Russia, it doesn't seem to be happening there. And perhaps that gives an indication of the strength of Ukraine, and what is missing in Russia. Because I think we must as humans and as historians try and reflect on what is happening and try and make sense of it. Otherwise, we just keep blundering into dreadful situations.

I think I had been impressed by the rapid advances in technology, the increasing use of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons systems, high tech – the talk that in the future there will be no need for pilots, no need for tank drivers, no need for sailors on ships. These would all be automated and patterns would be established. The ways of ordering and controlling these machines would be set up. I thought, as many of us did, that there would continue to be levels of war that were fought on the ground, often civil wars in failed states, where the weapons would be much more primitive. What we're seeing in Ukraine, I think, is, first of all, a state-to-state war between two modern states, which we haven't seen for a very long time indeed. We've seen in the past, [but] since 1945, we've seen wars between very powerful modern states and much less powerful, much less technologically advanced enemies. The American war in Vietnam, for example, or the Russian war in Afghanistan, and then the coalition war, NATO's coalition war in Afghanistan. And so I think we had all got used to the idea that wars would either be these dreadful civil wars fought at a not very

high technological level, or one great power intervening somewhere where it had a preponderance of advanced technology on its side.

I was surprised that we got another state-to-state war. I had come to think that these were probably not going to happen much any more, and we should all hope they wouldn't happen because of the dangers of rapid escalation into nuclear weapons. What we're seeing in Ukraine is, as you say, in some ways, very much like the First and Second World Wars, in some ways like the wars that were fought by Athens and by Sparta. [In] that it matters having troops on the ground, it matters having commanders who know what they're doing. It matters being able to use deception and surprise against your enemy. It matters being able to defend against an attack. But what we're also seeing is the incorporation of technology into the ways in which this war is being fought.

One of the great surprises, I think, has been the use of social media, which has been used not only – brilliantly, in fact, in the case of the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people – to present their case not just to their own people, but to the Russians and then to the rest of the world, but also the uses of social media to pinpoint where the enemy is. To provide up-to-date information on what the enemy might be doing. The use, also, of technology, which is often very cheap compared to the things it's destroying. One of the real surprises has been just how effective drones are. And how useful they have been against much more advanced weapon systems. And the fact that there has been virtually no air war over Ukraine – the Russians have not been able to establish air dominance. And that, I think, is very largely both because of artillery, but also because of drones. And so we're having to rethink what the wars of the future might look like, that they may well be the sort of war that we see in Ukraine, where you see movements of troops on the fields, you see ships at sea, but you also see the incorporation of high technology.

What I think is terrifying, and I think we're terrified of this at the moment, is the danger of escalation. And the danger that the side which feels itself to be losing, or wants to win a decisive victory, will escalate very rapidly to highly destructive weapons, whether those be nuclear, chemical or biological. And so this war, I think, is going to prove to be one of those wars which is really a turning point as we look at the history of war and conflict between nations.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. And my question goes to Serhii, very much like the question before but in a slightly different context: where do we place this war in the context of Ukraine? And it starts probably, broadly, in the

context of Eastern European history: Polish–Ukraine, Ukraine–Russia relations. Are there any historical parallels or precedents in Ukraine's history or Eastern European history that may help us better understand this war?

Serhii Plokhy: Well, I'm thinking about this war as a nineteenth-century war in terms of its goals and ideology that undersigns it. A twentieth-century war in terms of tactics, certainly on the part of the of the Russian Federation and its Army. And a twenty-first- century war in terms of technology. And all of that comes together, which really makes me look at this war as one of many wars of national liberation. The war that accompanied the fall and disintegration of the empires, but fought already in the information age and fought already in the nuclear age. And this is certainly something that makes it in many ways unpredictable.

Again, speaking about the broader trends in history, we know what happens with empires. We know that they lose. We know what happens with the people who defend their independence: they win. And in that sense, speaking about hope and optimism … at least my historical lens provides me with that sort of feeling and understanding when I look further and further into the future. In terms of the place in this war, in the context and space where it is happening – and the space is, of course, the former Russian Empire, the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, the former Ottoman Empire. All of these historical forces and trends are still at play here. We can see the role of Erdogan, and certainly he is involved very much in what is happening in the region and in Crimea. We see the mobilization and rebuilding of the transatlantic alliance between United States and a new Europe, an extended Europe, that wasn't there for a long, long period of time. And we see the continuing disintegration of the Russian Empire, which, again, the collapse of the Soviet Union and dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 gave a major boost to it.

And when I talk about the disintegration of the empire, what I have in mind is, of course the re-formation, reformatting, of the space – cultural, geographical, strategic, political and otherwise – of the former Russian Empire in the Soviet Union. Because at stake are not just the question of the borders of Ukraine today – and Russia just formally annexed the territories that it doesn't even control in Ukraine – but at stake are also the borders of the Russian Federation, as they came into existence in 1991. We see the rise in mobilization in the non-Russian parts and non-Russian republics of the Russian Federation, from Uzbekistan, to Yakutia, to Buryatia. Chechnya is de facto a state in its own right,

a state within a state, it's really a medieval sort of relationship that exists now between Moscow and Grozny. And this is also part of the same frame, part of the same story. Again, the good thing is we know where, eventually, that ends. The bad thing is we really don't know what will happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. And that is, again, a big, a big uncertainty.

But what will happen will certainly depend on the people on the ground. And Ukraine is defining history and is writing history now, not just for itself, but also for the post-imperial space and post-imperial world, broadly speaking.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: What you just have said made me think about the persistence of the past. How it's intertwined with nowadays' issues, and this also helped me to formulate the next question to Margaret, because basically this about the history of international order and the history of relations. It seems now that with this war, that international relations, the coordination between nations, revealed their inefficiency. They could neither prevent nor mitigate the aggression. What do you think would happen, or will happen, to this kind of international organization after the war? What impact this war may have on the international system?

Margaret MacMillan: It's very hard to gauge. It's a very good question and it's very hard to tell in the middle of it. I think two things are possible. One is that the West – and this is no longer a geographical term, it's a term for shared values and shared ways of doing things, so it includes Australia, Japan, North America, many of the South American countries, but also Europe. The West has been forced to re-evaluate its relationships with authoritarian states and in particular, of course, with Russia. I think for a long time there was a belief that Russia could be brought into the international system, that the more trade there was with Russia, the more investment there was in Russia, more Russians could travel abroad, the more the oligarchs could buy houses in London or wherever … That the intertwining of Russia with the rest of the world would make Russia less inclined to aggression. And I think we're now realizing that this was very wrong and Europe has ended up with considerable dependencies, particularly in energy, on Russia, which has made it more vulnerable than I think it would choose to be, and than it should be.

And so what the West is in the process of doing – and it's never easy, and there will be those who pull against it as, for example, the Italian election showed –

but I think what the West is doing is getting a sense of what it believes is important, and being forced to redefine what it stands for, and being forced to see where its interests lie and understand that those interests do not lie in dealing at the moment with a Russia which is prepared to break all international norms. How long that will carry into peace time? I don't know. But it seems to me this is again a very important moment for the West and it has forced a real rethinking and re-evaluation of how we work together and how we withstand pressure from rogue states like Russia. I think what will also happen is how we look at the ways in which some sort of stable international order can be built. Peace will come eventually. We don't know how, we don't know when, but eventually this war will end. And what we're going to have to think is how can we either reinforce or come up with new ways of managing the international order.

It is going to have to involve more than the West against the rest. It's going to have to involve the West often dealing with authoritarian regimes such as China's, which it does not necessarily and should not necessarily approve of. Many of the things that China does are totally in distinction to what Western values hold to be important. But I think there's going to have to be some way of maintaining, at the very least, a stability. I mean, that was the strength of the Concert of Europe. It was a conservative organization. You can criticize it in many ways, but it did maintain a stable international order for at least part of the nineteenth century.

And I think we're all coming to realize that stability cannot be bought at all price. But when we're coming to realize that stability is very important. Without a stable international order, with constant conflicts. With encouragement – I mean, one of the dangers now is that Putin's aggression, absolutely naked aggression, has given and will give comfort and inspiration to other leaders who want to do the same sort of thing. One of the very important norms I think that has been breached since the end of the Second World War is that territory taken by force cannot be annexed, should not be annexed. And this is something that has happened very rarely since 1945. And for the most part, the international community has frowned upon it and in some cases managed to reverse it.

What we're going to have to do is think of how we get at least a minimum of cooperation among very different systems, because in the end, given the increasing devastation the weapons are capable of unleashing, and given the existential problem that we face with climate change, we cannot afford to go on doing what we've been doing. But whether we learn these lessons or not is another matter. I'm optimistic, but I'm not always sure that this is going to happen.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. Talking about the lessons, my next question goes to Serhii. He wrote a really excellent book on Yalta, and I wonder: do you see any kind of a conclusion, or let's say, lessons from Yalta that we should draw from this kind of experience, for nowadays, especially in Ukraine?

Serhii Plokhy: Well, one thing that probably is applicable to what is happening today is the fact that the regimes in Moscow act sometimes in the same way and use the same rhetoric. If you look at the arguments that Stalin was putting in his discussions with Churchill and FDR, he was using a lot the term 'fascist'. So anyone who was not Soviet or somehow was parachuted or controlled by the Soviet Union was considered to be a fascist. So the term 'fascists' and 'Nazis' to de-legitimize democratic leaders, non-Communist leaders, including non-Communist left, not just the right. That's really where Putin takes a page from Stalin and we certainly see that very well in the way the conference was conducted. And what I can say is that it gets less traction today than it was getting back in 1945 and, most importantly, less traction than it was getting in 2014 when the war just started. Because this war didn't start in February of 2022. It started in February of 2014 with the Russian military takeover of the building of the Crimean parliament and Crimean cabinet of ministers, and then dragging in the members of the Crimean parliament to vote for – not for independence and not for reunification with Russia, but for extended rights for Crimea.

Another thing, going back to the Yalta Conference, it's very clear for me that what will happen in this war will be decided more on the battlefield than at the negotiation table. And from that point of view, the biggest negotiation and the biggest successes in negotiation that Ukraine can achieve, they can be achieved on the battlefield. And my feeling is that this is something that the Ukrainian leadership, Ukrainian Army, and Ukrainian people understand now more than at any other point in the past.

And finally, the ideas about the imperial or post-imperial control that were coming from the Soviet Union, back in 1945, and the ideas that are coming from now and today. And they include a combination of forms of control of this post-imperial space, from the annexation that is done under the banner of the principle of nationality and principle of self-determination. Back in 1945, there is an extension of the Ukrainian borders as part of the borders of the Soviet Union, and then there is an emergence of the so-called buffer states, but their sphere of influence is controlled by Moscow. That wasn't Stalin's know-how, it was in many ways – at least if you remove the nationality issue and nationality

argument, in terms of the creation of the buffer states and the zone of buffer state – certainly borrowed from the Russian imperial policies. And it is now in full view today.

Again, it's a Stalinist combination of the nationality as a legitimizing factor, as a factor legitimizing imperial control and imperial acquisitions. So I see a lot of parallels, and I think that it's important to keep those parallels in mind because we know how it ended in 1945. From that point of view, we kind of can predict and can see where that kind of rhetoric, where those kind of policies can lead in the future.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. And once again I encourage you to not just listen to our distinguished authors, but also to read their books, because for me, their books were my eye-opener, especially the book by Professor MacMillan – in one of her books she emphasizes this one paradox of the war that struck me. This is that even though wars are very destructive, they also may be very beneficial for societies. So my question goes to Margaret: What could be the benefits of this war for the future of the world?

Margaret MacMillan: It sounds like an awful thing to say that war does bring benefits, when you think of the costs of it. And I think we would all prefer that we can make progress as societies without going to war. But having said that, I think one of the things that has happened as a result of this war is it has, I think, revealed as Serhii has just put so eloquently, the nature of the current Russian regime and its imperial mindset. I mean, I think we tend to forget that Russia is the last of the great European empires. And while most of the European empires wound up, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not peacefully, in the decades after the Second World War, the Russian Empire didn't. And we're seeing, I think, with some of the developments in places like Kazakhstan, how a Russian imperial rule may be weakening. In fact, the war in Ukraine has served to weaken it even more. What I think the war has done is, and this is surely not what Putin was intending, to create a much stronger sense of Ukraine and what Ukraine is about. And helped develop, in ways that were unimaginable before the war, a sense of solidarity among Ukrainians. And I think it's also made people beyond Ukraine realize just how important a location it is, how important a country it is, how important it is that Ukraine not be absorbed into a reconstituted Russian Empire. And so I think that is something – as I say, the cost is much too high, but that is something that has come out of the war.

And again, just to repeat what I said before, I think it's made those of us in the rest of the West really think very seriously about what it is we value, what we think is important, what we think we should be directing our resources to. And so I think this war, I don't know if Serhii would agree with me, but I think is really a watershed in the history of the twenty-first century. Things will be different after it. And as far as technology and war itself goes, this always happens – almost always happens – in wars, that technologies are adapted, civilian technologies are brought into war. I think what we're seeing is the great power – terrifying, but also very useful in war – the great power of social media. The participation that social media allows of citizens and the capacity to get information very quickly abroad. I think what we're also understanding is the need to counter misinformation and disinformation, but that I think we were realizing anyway. But I think again, the war has brought it out.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you very much, Margaret. The same question but rephrased to Serhii. Basically, I would like to focus on Ukraine and, about what Margaret said, that war brings the strengths of Ukrainian identity and the strengths of Ukraine [as a] nation. Do you, Serhii, you see any other benefits, potential benefits of this war for Ukraine?

Serhii Plokhy: Well, first of all, I agree that this war changes and strengthens Ukrainian identity. And that really started not in 2022, it started in 2014. We saw that the change of the political map of Ukraine, the landslide victories of the two – during the presidential elections – first by Petro Poroshenko, then by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which completely changed the map, which before that, during the presidential elections, were divided almost fifty-fifty. And this transformation of, and strengthening of, the Ukrainian national identity was something that was happening since 2015 and fully manifested itself this year because Putin was building his plans keeping in mind the Ukraine of 2014. And he invaded Ukraine of 2014, he believed. But the year was different and Ukrainian society was different. And I think that what is happening now, it will only strengthen that sense of identity, which is a very important historical factor.

The strengthening is happening against the claims coming from Moscow that Russians and Ukrainians are one and the same people, which is the Russian imperial model of the nineteenth century. And strengthening of Ukrainian identity automatically means, also, a transformation of the Russian identity. So it's a major, major shift that is happening. And again, the chronological frame which

to look at it would be anywhere between 150 and 120 years. Even longer chronological frame would be for a different – related, but still different – development in Ukraine.

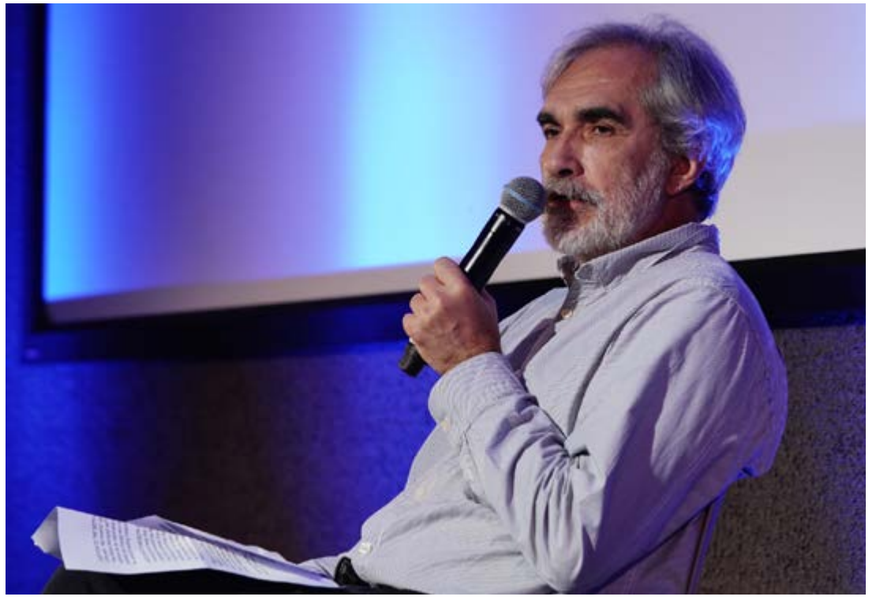
Ukraine, for the first time in centuries, Ukrainian society, Ukrainian people claim the state for themselves. Ukraine, a Ukrainian project, modern national project, emerged and survived in opposition to the state that banned Ukrainian publications for forty years, or was used as the way to collect medieval tribute, as it was during the times of Yanukovych. And now for the first time, the Ukrainian society associates itself as the state. The state is also the Armed Forces. This is the institutions of the state. That state is there to protect people, to help them. The state didn't collapse when the war started. The firefighters, they are fighting fires and dealing with the attacks. And this is a historical transformation. For Ukrainians, it was very difficult to get their state, but then even more difficult to learn how to live in the state of our own, of your own. And this war changes that.

And moving to a different level, [one of] more global history. One thing that is absolutely clear, this is the end of the post-Cold War era and post-Cold War period. One thing is that the peace dividend that was there that emerged with

(From left to right) Margaret MacMillan Serhii Plokhy and Yaroslav Hrytsak

the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when we thought that a major imperial or post-imperial state can collapse without a major cataclysmic war – that era is over. So we are now at the beginning of a new era, of a new period, and it very much depends on the outcome of this war. What sort of world – not just here, not just people in Ukraine, not just people in Europe, [but] globally, what sort of world will we all be living in? Because a victory of Russia suggests one sort of a world and one sort of a pattern, one sort of model for building that world. Victory for Ukraine suggests a very different outcome. And from that point of view, the war's significance goes beyond the year 2022 or 2023, and goes beyond Lviv or Kyiv.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. I would like to draw your attention to a fact that occurred at the very beginning of the war. There is a very good academic journal focused on history, which has been founded and operated by Russian historians, young historians, the ones who made their PhD in the North American universities. And this journal is called *Ab Imperio*. They started in Kazan. And the term *Ab Imperio*, from an empire, also tells you a lot about that, that they were forced to leave Russia and nowadays they're based in Chicago. So to



make a long story short, at the very beginning of the war they initiated a discussion: has history betrayed us? In a sense what they meant, that whatever view us historians would write, it looked [as if] our writings can change very little, if anything. So my question to both Margaret and Serhii: So what is the sense of writing history nowadays?

Margaret MacMillan: Well, I think we keep the records. And we, as much as we can, challenge those who misuse history. What has struck me very much about this war, and indeed of much history since the end of the Cold War is how those who want to carry out particular actions will use history – and it's often a very bad history. Serhii mentioned the essay that President Putin published, and if I'd been grading it, if I were a teacher grading it, I would have possibly passed it, because it showed some evidence of work, but I would have said it has a very bad grade. Because it was a distortion of history. It was weaving a story which justified action in the present. And we've been saying that a lot. History has acquired a sort of authority that dictators and those who wish to carry out aggressive or cruel acts will often use to give themselves validity. And I think what we must do as historians is challenge this. We keep the records. We try and tell as full and honest an account of the past as we can. And I think we challenge these stories because these stories, using history, provide the basis, often, for actions that are going to be enormously destructive of people and of nations.

And so, I think, we have a very important role. History is being used so much, misused so much, in the present, that we have to really continually challenge it. History is not there to provide you with justification for what you want to do. It's not there as a guide. It can be a help. It can help to open your mind. It can help you to ask good questions. It will help you warn that certain actions may produce certain reactions. But to use history as an authority for doing what you want to do is very dangerous. And we're seeing a lot of it. And therefore, I think historians really have to keep challenging. I think history is more important than ever. Good history.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. It's very encouraging, Margaret. And the same question goes to Serhii: So what is the sense of writing history nowadays, Serhii?

Serhii Plokhy: Margaret just mentioned good history. Now, Harvard, its mission statement says that one of the tasks is producing and spreading good knowledge. And this good knowledge and good history are today, I agree, absolutely more important than ever before, as we just entered the post-truth world. There are active forces and individuals who create this post-truth world for us. And we are the first line of resistance, and we continue to fight back. We have to continue to protect our turf, which is basically [that of] good history.

On the personal level, I was emotionally discomforted for a long period of time, as I saw that more and more things that were happening in the world in the last ten years were, not repeating, but certainly rhyming so well with the developments of the 1930s in Europe and worldwide – from the economic downturn, to the rise and mobilization of populism, to the rise of nationalism, radical nationalism, xenophobia, imperial ambitions, and so on and so forth. And my personal shock was coming on the level that, somehow, I believed that whatever we are writing in the books, whatever we teach our students, whatever we discuss – that those lessons were learned, that never again, that there is no way back. And the realization came that I, and probably others, my colleagues, we live in a bubble. And the other world, or the rest of the world was marching, or had a tendency of marching, to a different drumbeat. And that's where I want to appeal to historians in general, to get out of that bubble. It is our responsibility to do that. Staying in that bubble is dangerous. It's dangerous to the world, to societies, it's dangerous to us, personally. And from that point of view, we have to go there and fight for good history and fight for good knowledge. This is, again, not just in the interests of society, it's also in our personal interest.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: It sounds almost like a historical manifesto, Serhii. Yesterday we received the good news that our Ukrainian civil organization received the Nobel Prize. But I would say, for many of us Ukrainians, it's kind of bittersweet news because we were put in the same box as the civil organizations from Belarus and Russian. No doubt they deserve this, but what bothers us is that we are in the same group again – the 'Slavic nations', whatever they meant by that. And many of us, we've even been discussing this in the corridors of the forum, we see this as a kind of message from the West, or from part of the West, that we Ukrainians have to reconcile, start a reconciliation with Russia, so to speak. So my question is to both of you: what is your take of the situation? On what conditions, or in what way should or could Ukraine reconcile with Russia? Or with former Ukrainian citizens of the Donbass and Crimea? Does history have anything to say here?

Margaret MacMillan: I think history does have something to say, and I hadn't understood that was the reaction in Ukraine. And I can understand now why you might feel this. But I think what the Nobel Prize is doing is recognizing civic courage. And I think that's important wherever that may exist. We know that wars often end very badly, and they also provide the grounds for future wars. And it's very difficult in the middle of a war to think about making peace with the enemy, particularly when the enemy has behaved in such barbaric ways. There is now, I think, a huge gulf between the Ukrainian people and the Russian people, which will be very, very difficult to bridge. But I think in the long run, it is important that there be reconciliation. This is not for me to say – this will be up to the Russian and Ukrainian people themselves, and it will be difficult and they will have to do it as they wish. But it seems to me that what happened after the Second World War in Europe, when eventually Germany came to terms with its Nazi past, when it began to become part of the European community of nations again … I mean, you cannot escape geography. Germany is where it is, and Europe is better if it gets on with its neighbours. And Ukraine is where it is, and it is better for it and for its neighbours if they can get on, rather than be enemies forever.

And so I think we should hope. As I say, this will be very much up to the Ukrainian and Russian people themselves. But I think we should hope that one day the path followed by Germany, which eventually managed to become a democratic, non-aggressive member of the community of nations in Europe, which managed to overcome its long-standing differences with France. I mean, if you had predicted in 1945 that the French President and the German Chancellor would be standing together to commemorate the war … that would have been, I think, very difficult to predict. In the long run, that has been better for Europe. But as I say, it is going to take a great deal of time. And those of us on the outside can only offer what support we can, what encouragement we can, but it will be up to the peoples themselves.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. I'm glad you mentioned French–German reconciliation because not many people are aware, especially outside this region, that we had a similar reconciliation, the Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation. We had a long, long record of animosities and conflicts, and the mutual ethnic cleansings which amounted sometimes to genocides. And it's a kind of miracle that we managed – Polish and Ukrainians managed to reconcile themselves. And now we see the effect, to the extent that Polish elites, Polish society, helps Ukraine. And this is something that is very important. But what we know from history, this is a result of deliberate efforts on both sides to come to terms and to settle the case towards conciliation. Our concern – and this is a deeper concern – is that we haven't experienced such efforts from Russia. And this is probably the most dramatic or tragic story. We so far haven't seen these voices of reconciliation. And therefore, my question goes to Serhii, and I would like him specifically to focus on the history of this region. What does history have to say, or to suggest for us, if you look for the peace solution in this region?

Serhii Plokhy: Well, first of all, my congratulations to Ukraine and Ukrainians for winning the Nobel Prize. People born in Ukraine [have won] the Nobel Prize many times before. This is the first time someone living in Ukraine gets a prize. Certainly, those from Russia and Belarus deserve the prize as well. The fact that the Nobel committee made it a package deal, that reminded me of an old joke [that goes]: what is a camel? A camel is a horse created by a committee. I have no doubt that all the inclinations were very positive and everyone who got the Nobel Prize deserved it. But the way they did the packaging raises questions about what history textbooks they keep reading. And that brings me back to the idea of our responsibility as historians to produce good history.

In terms of the reconciliation, yes, there is simply no other way that humankind has invented. And it is not an easy process. We all know, especially those who belong to the history guild in Ukraine, or around Ukraine, know about the debates going on with Polish historians, but mostly on the level of politicians and societies between Ukraine and Poland, which suggests that these things can be very, very difficult. But that work has to start now. And it has to start now to assure that the post-war future is the future which would be actually much easier, more comfortable and more secure to live in than it is now, than it is today. What we face today is the largest outmigration of intellectuals from Russia since the revolution of 1970, and the majority of them are not fleeing the mobilization. The majority of them are leaving Russia as a sign of disagreement, profound disagreement, with its regime. And it is very important to keep the bridges working in that sense. And [to keep] the dialogue open. Because that's where the future of the Russian–Ukrainian relations and Ukrainian–Russian relations really is and will be formed. What is happening today in Russia is very much a continuation of ideas about the unity of the Russians and Ukrainians, the need for annexation of Southern Ukraine that comes from Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Those ideas were there in the 1970s and 1980s. And what the Russian intellectuals thirty years from now will be thinking, and what society will be discussing very much depends on what is happening today, when it comes to the relations

of Ukrainian intellectuals, world intellectuals with their Russian counterparts outside of Russia.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. And now there's a personal question. I know that you are constantly working on different historical projects, and I believe there are some books on your working table. And I would like to ask you, Margaret, will the current Ukrainian-Russian war have an impact on your future books?

Margaret MacMillan: That's a very interesting question, and I suppose it will. I suppose, as historians, we're always affected by what we see in our own lifetimes and what we go through in our own lifetimes. And as a Canadian, having lived in the long peace, which parts of the world have enjoyed since 1945, I perhaps haven't taken seriously enough the fragility of peace and how easily it can be disrupted. What I'm looking at, at the moment, is the Allied relationship in the Second World War, and I've become very conscious of just how difficult – seeing what's happening with the Western alliance dealing with Ukraine – just how difficult it is to bring alliances together, keep them together, keep them focused on a common goal. And so perhaps when I come to write this book, I will be more aware of just how provisional alliances can be and how easily that can be broken, even when they have a common enemy. And how difficult it can be to get agreement on tactics, on supplies. What I'm also realizing yet again, which I think I did know, is just how important supplies are and how absolutely important it is that supplies keep coming. And so I think that may well affect what I look at as I work on my book.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. The same question goes to Serhii. Serhii, what in the current war will have an impact, as I bet it will, on your future book or books?

Serhii Plokhy: Yes. Yes, it will. It already has that impact. And we can continue where Margaret just ended in terms of the importance of the logistics and supply lines. For me, a major discovery would be the importance of rivers. I knew that they were important back in the eighteenth century, when I was writing

about this. I didn't realize how important they could be today. The impact certainly will go beyond that.

And one thing that already this war – how it influences me: it makes me a little bit more humble in terms of realizing the limits of my own ability to understand things without experiencing them, and without living through them, at least emotionally. In the past, I wrote quite a lot about people like Mykhailo Hrushevsky, the founder of the Ukrainian national historiography, the first hand of the Ukrainian state who lived through World War I, internment, revolution, exile. Or Oleksandr Ohloblyn, who lived through World War II and then ended up in the United States. And I engaged with them on the intellectual level – their ideas, their approaches. I knew their background, I knew what they went through. But I didn't really fully understand what that was, what that meant for them as historians, for formulating their views and ideas. And now that realization suddenly came to me. So, war certainly is entering or re-entering my own horizons in a very different way that it would be otherwise. Again, emotions, and understanding of those emotions, becomes an important part of my thinking today. Whether that will really result in some very specific works, maybe yes, maybe not. But that changes my overall thinking about history.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much for this answer. I find it hard to formulate my final question. I do have my list, but it's the question that keeps bothering me, returns to me all the time as a professional historian, especially when I'm writing my books or teaching my students. And this is about the sense of the historical writing again, but in an epistemological sense, so to speak. I would refer here to *The History Manifesto,* in which Jo Guldi says that one of the major problems nowadays in the political scene is that politicians stopped thinking historically, probably with the exception of Putin. They think in terms of one or two elections – five or ten years is probably the longest perspective; they think about their political career. And this changes something. Especially because the problems we deal with are historically rooted and they have more than ten years, or twenty, or even sometimes 100 years of roots and … this is the condition of the world.

On the other hand, what we historians write, that for several decades probably is facing a very serious crisis, historical writing, in the sense that we don't want to address these issues. Because basically we want to discuss about something else – about the linguistic turn, cultural turn, historical memory … but not the hard stuff. And I believe what the war brings is that the hard stuff is very

important, it's still very much there. I mean, there are conditions like, just as Serhii mentioned, the rivers that matter very much. So my question is, there is a strong sense that we are living in the world that has no sense. And this is issue of the insecurity of the future that makes such a scenario, like Putin, who promised some kind of security, possible. And I believe there is something that we also contributed as historians, because we basically said 'There's no narratives, there's no rules'... those kind of things.

So my question is: does the past have any sense, or do we create this kind of sense, so to speak? This probably is not quite, how should I say, a rational question, but still this is the question that puzzled me. May I ask, to start with, Margaret to answer this question.

Margaret MacMillan: I think it's a complicated question, and I hope I understand it correctly. I think we do not think historically enough and nor our leaders. What history does, and I think of the example of Winston Churchill, who had a great sense of history, which I think enabled him to see what might happen in the longer term. As early as 1917, he was predicting or wondering whether Germany and Russia would one day become allies again. And I think that came out of a very deep sense of history, an ability to look beyond what's happening in the immediate and to see or to try and guess what the longer-term trends should be. And I think few of our political leaders have it today, or if they refer to history, they refer to their own very specific versions, as President Putin does or President Xi Jinping does. They have a history which is created in a way to justify their own existence in office and the policies they adopt.

I also want to pick up on something Serhii said, because I do think, and you mentioned it as well, I think we have moved too far in the historical profession to looking at only particular things, and avoiding the discussion of other subjects. We've become often too inward looking. When I look at journals which are filled with how historians created the past or how historians promoted a particular view of things, this is interesting historiography, but we need to look at more than that. We need to look at things like resources and rivers. We need to look at questions of power. There's been an aversion in a number of universities – particularly in North America, which I'm most familiar with – to studying issues of power, to studying politics, to studying war itself, as if somehow studying these things mean that you approve of them. That if you study war, you somehow like it and you want it to happen, which you wouldn't say to someone who is studying social injustice, and you wouldn't say to someone who is studying the dark side of imperialism.

I do think that political history and the history of war – not military history in the narrow sense, but the history of wars and the history of the interrelationship of society in wars is very important. And there's no preparation we can give for our political leaders. But I do think having this sense of the possibilities of the human experience, having the sense of the wider historical frame, being able to formulate those questions – where might we be going? What are the important trends that we need to pick out? We should be thinking and we want our leaders to be thinking of what might be happening more than five years from now, ten years from now, twenty years from now. We do need to be thinking of that. And I think we historians, again, need to take a look at what we're doing ourselves and see how we can contribute to that.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. And the same question to Serhii.

Serhii Plokhy: I couldn't agree more. There are clear, clear disproportions emerging in the field of study of history, especially when it comes to the universities. And one thing about history as providing some guidance and providing advice – of course, at some point in human history, the idea that history was a teacher of life, *magistra vitae,* was very popular. But in my experience, only the lazy were making jokes about that. And when the editors of the books written for a broader audience are pushing me, and probably they're pushing others as well, saying: 'OK, what are the lessons? Talk about the lessons here.' You would write those lines with the hope that your colleagues would never see them, because what lessons can there be? Of course none. And in that sense, more hope for me is provided by historians, but historians not in the history departments, but let's say my colleagues at the Kennedy School of Government, where for decades they are running a seminar on applied history. So not trying to hide the idea that politicians – that [for] the high-level bureaucracy that they are training in, they should know history and that they can go to history to look, to acquire knowledge. Good knowledge that can be used in their actual work of governing the state, of directing foreign policy and so on and so forth. I agree with Margaret that the war should come back into our curriculums, into the way we think about the world. Because if this doesn't happen, then we don't teach that. We don't write about that. We don't educate others. And the war will come to us, not just to our curriculum, to the classroom, as a discussion subject; it can come as a reality, as has happened in Ukraine.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much, Serhii. Thank you so much, Margaret. I ran out of my questions. So I believe now is the right time to open the floor. So Bohdan Nahaylo, the Chief Editor of the KyivPost, please.

Bohdan Nahaylo ***[from the audience]:*** Thank you, Yaroslav. And thank you to our distinguished historians for such a stimulating presentation. Two quick questions, if I may. Serhii, you suggested that we're dealing with unfinished business from 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union. But we haven't mentioned today Belarus, Moldova, potentially Georgia – perhaps are we not seeing unfinished business from 1918? In the sense of a proper reconfiguration of Europe; a completion of that process with the borders of Europe ending at Russia's border?

That's one question, and one last question to broaden out the discussion. You've spoken more about the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on relations with the West, but more globally, how is this going to impact on China's perception of Russia for the future? India's? Latin America's? Africa's? Assuming that Russia does lose and Ukraine is victorious. Thank you.

Serhii Plokhy: First of all, Bohdan, it's good to hear you. We can't see you, but it's good to hear you. And thanks for these excellent questions. On 1991 versus 1918, I can't agree more. What I think is that 1991 is the start of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which is a continuation of the story of the fall of the Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary. So the story starts and begins there. When you look at today's Middle East – at least I look at that as a yet-undecided issue related to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. When you look at the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s, and continuation of the tensions, of course they preceded 1914, something that Margaret was talking about. So we are dealing here with long, grey processes of the disintegration of empires. And I think that the frame that you suggest – I certainly think this is a good one.

In terms of China, India and the rest of the world. I talked about this war opening a new page and new stage in the global history; closing the stage that started with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. And one thing that we see here is a replay of some of the themes coming out of the Cold War. People are talking about the return of the Cold War, or sometimes there are references to Cold War Two. Indeed, a lot rhymes there. One thing is that the West – in the broader understanding, as Margaret referred to it – is back. A now-enlarged West, which includes countries like Poland or the Baltic states, so that geographically it's a bigger

entity than it used to be during the Cold War. What you see, this war actually is a push toward the potential formation of another alliance in the East.

Speaking about things that rhyme, the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s certainly comes to the fore today. With a really diminished – in terms of its military potential, economic potential – Russia that cuts ties, economic and otherwise, with Europe, and in this much weaker position moving toward China. Which, in my opinion, suggests a possibility of a return of the Cold War as a bipolar world. So that war, potentially, can certainly strengthen China and set it even more on the path of emerging as another pole in the world. So instead of a multipolar world, which Putin was thinking about, there can be a return of a bipolar world as the result of that war. Which also, if you think in terms of the paradigm of the Cold War, brings to the fore the non-alignment movement. And it brings to the fore India, that continues to sit on the fence in this current war between Russia, on the one hand, the United States on the other. And there is a competition going on for Africa, right? That's the competition that was there in the 1970s and 1980s. And now it's back, not just in economic terms, but also in political terms.

So, again, that's where history can help us to understand, to realize that there is a repetition of the patterns, but there will be no repetition of history *per se*. But clearly, clearly, all these things about the poles, about the bipolar world, multipolar world, the countries sitting on the fence, the realignment of the forces … this war is really a major contributor to the change. And not just an invitation – it demands from us to start thinking about those things again, and not just in geopolitical terms, but also, as we discussed here, more broadly, in terms of societies … before this war, I would have said 'societies and cultures' and now I would say 'societies, warfare and cultures'. So that's a change.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much. Are there any other questions? No? So probably it's not a question, but a kind of suggestion … Do you have any message of hope – in the very final moment of our discussion – for Ukrainians, for Ukrainian historians, for Ukraine? If I may, Margaret … Because the title of this [event] is 'Hope, Humanity and War'. We still need the hope.

Margaret MacMillan: What I'm seeing – and you are seeing it much more closely – is that we've been reminded, and I think we need to be reminded, that human beings are more than selfish individuals, that we have a capacity for altruism, we have a capacity for working with others, we have a capacity for making sac-

rifices for others. And I think, in some ways, the years since 1991 have seen a triumph of a sort of individualism, and an idea that the individual trumps all – sorry, I don't want to use the word 'Trump' – but the individual is more important than society. And an unwillingness of people in Western societies to take responsibility for their own societies, to understand that they are benefiting from things done by others over time. That they're benefiting from institutions and infrastructures built up by others over time. And I think we see it in the sort of types of television shows that are popular in the West – I mean, the Kardashian phenomenon of people who live, as far as I can see, entirely to be famous and make money. Or the predominance of influencers who tell people to model themselves on their lives, which often seem to be very selfish and rather empty lives.

And I think what we're realizing, yet again, and I think Ukraine is reminding us of this very forcefully indeed, is that there is another type of human life, another type of human interaction. Just the ways in which Ukrainians have come together to fight the war has shown something, which I think we didn't take into account enough before the war started. The sheer importance of the human willingness to do things, human imagination … One of the great advantages that Ukraine has had in this war has been its morale. I think a lot of us looked at the Russians, we looked at the number of the tanks they had, the number of soldiers they had. We looked at the sheer force they had, and we said 'There's no way Ukraine can beat these people,' because the numbers are on the side of the Russians. And we're realizing that there's more than numbers. Of course, the material still matters. It matters that Ukraine gets the best equipment that it possibly can. It matters that Ukraine has the ability to fight. But what really seems to me to have counted is that the Ukrainians want to fight in ways that the Russians don't. And I think we're being reminded again of the complexity of the human experience and of things about the human spirit, which perhaps we tended to forget.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much, Margaret, you made my day. Serhii, would you give us hope?

Serhii Plokhy: OK, let's hope I will make your evening. Yes, I will try to do that. When I think about hope and feelings of this war … it started with a shock of the war. It continued with the hope that Ukraine would survive. And by now, it's beyond hope. It's about conviction. First of all, that Ukraine will survive, that Ukrainian society will survive. The war started with the ideas of just denying the right of the nation, the right of the people, the right of the country to exist. And the conviction is not only that Ukraine will survive and continue; the conviction is also that Ukrainian victory will make this world as a whole a better place than it was before. That this is a victory from which the global community can benefit in major ways. So, again, it is based on the hope, but it's already an edifice of conviction when it comes to my thinking and my watching what is happening. And I'm very grateful to the Ukrainians who turned my shock into hope and then conviction.

Yaroslav Hrytsak: Thank you so much, Serhii. You also made my day, which will serve me for tomorrow. We had the brilliant chance, the real opportunity to hear the two most distinguished historians. And I would like to thank them both for what they did, their contribution to the discussion. I encourage you strongly to read their books. I encourage you strongly to read books on history, good books on history, because this is one of the best recipes to overcome the past and to make the world a better living place. Thank you so much. And then thank you, our guests, for their brilliant contribution to our discussion.

War Crimes and Memory

Participants: Andrii Kulykov (Chair), Stanislav Aseyev, Nataliya Gumenyuk, Jonathan Littell, Masi Nayyem, Philippe Sands

Andrii Kulykov: Participants, ladies and gentlemen, we're starting. It's called 'War Crimes and Memory'. *[Turning to the panellists]* Have you actually read the introduction in the festival's programme? The question is for everyone … You hesitated. Strain your ears; I'll read it out loud and then you will have to answer very briefly the introductory question.

'Ukraine and Syria are the first large-scale conflicts, not only to be documented on social media, but where social media is a theatre of war. In the same way that TV transformed the dynamics of Vietnam, social media will shape the experience of this war and its outcome. Will the ubiquity of social media result in accountability for war times? Will it hamper people's ability to forget and one day even forgive?'

This is how this panel is being presented to the wider audience. But my question is, and I implore you to answer within thirty seconds, which contradiction is there in this presentation? And Jonathan Littell will start.

[Jonathan Littell gestures to Philippe Sands to answer instead; Philippe Sands returns the gesture, the audience laughs]

Jonathan Littell: Seeing that I don't use social networks. I'm really the worst person to answer this.

Andrii Kulykov: Stanislav Aseyev.

Stanislav Aseyev: Well, in fact, I think that social media in many ways distorts the processes which are taking place in Ukraine, and in view of our topic, war crimes, I think it's better to have a professional conversation about these is-

sues than rely, for example, on Facebook, with its abundance of emotions and opinions. What about Nataliya, what is your take?

[Not all the panellists were able to hear the simultaneous interpretation during Stanislav Aseyev's reply, so Andrii Kulykov summarises.]

Andrii Kulykov: The translation was, briefly, that we should depend on professional media rather than go on for social media, where there is a lot of emotions and all of this. OK, Nataliya.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: At first I will uncover your bias, [Andrii]. I know you're not a big fan of some of the social media, so that's something the audience must know, I think. But, just yesterday, Facebook reminded me about a post I made in 2012, being absolutely fascinated by Syrian activists using Facebook as a useful tool – because they didn't have media – as a useful tool to deliver aid, to find the safe passage from town A to B. And in 2012, I was very fascinated by that. A lot had happened since then, and my answer would be the social media, as any media, is just the tool. A lot depends on the intention and the way you use it.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much. Philippe, your turn.

Philippe Sands: I'm more of the George Orwell line of thinking. I basically don't think anything is new. It's just a variation on a theme of what has come before.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much. Do we have Masi Nayyem?

Masi Nayyem: Yes, I can hear you.

Andrii Kulykov: Masi, so the question was: What sort of contradiction may we perceive in the way the introduction to this panel is formulated?

Masi Nayyem: If I understood correctly, the question is about social media. Personally, as a lawyer, I take it exclusively as another source of evidence of war crimes that are taking place. And this is a good source of evidence. Of course, that is very important for us to know the difference between fake news and real news, emotions and when the situation is reasonable. But now people who don't have access to the media have his or her own media, and in this sense, social media plays a positive role in gathering evidence of war crimes.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much. And I think that the brief answers that we got from our panellists have proven that the contradiction here is 'in the same way'. 'In the same way the TV transformed the dynamics of Vietnam, social media will shape the experience and blah, blah, blah.' It never happens the same way. Even if it stays the same, it stays the same in a slightly different way.

And now every one of you will have up to seven minutes to extrapolate on what you have started to say. And then, of course, you will react to what you have said. I remind you that the basic questions of our discussion are: will the ubiquity of social media result in accountability for war times? And may I add … Or will something else result in this responsibility? Will it hamper people's ability to forget and one day even forgive? I think that the first person to start on their seven minutes is, rightly, Masi Nayyem. Masi, seven minutes for your messages that are absolutely vital to be heard. Go on.

Masi Nayyem: You know, I'm just going to take a moment now to talk about what the war has become now, which was not the case in the year 2015 when I served in the army. I remember that we were in Mali Shcherbaky, literally two weeks later I was wounded, it was May 2022. And in this village, Mali Shcherbaky, we had to kill the dogs. And since the dogs were tied, they were already mad, which means it was impossible to cut their leash and let them go, because they would have started biting us, and they were hungry. Of course, they would die their own death.

It means that in these places people were in such a hurry trying to escape that, in fact, they did not even have time to untie their dogs. And you know, if I posted it on Facebook, it would definitely get a lot of likes. There were lots of emotions, but it is very important to think about the consequences, how one can work with this information.

For me personally, history serves the purpose of teaching us not to repeat the mistakes of the past. If we had shown clearly enough, had clearly shown the shameful crimes that took place during the Second World War, then perhaps this war would not have happened. However, now we have an opportunity to show even more clearly the crimes that are happening. And you know, there is a very interesting argument, how this war will be remembered by the girl Iryna, who before identifying the body of her mother, who was shot during the evacuation, had to look at fifty-five unidentified bodies in the local morgue. What will she remember? She, this girl… Well, most likely, they will not write about it on social media, but the journalists who are working now will write about it. And all this information, you know, is the spirit of our time, and the body – it will become the body when these facts lay the foundation for the cases that will be heard by the court regarding the crimes committed by the Russian Federation.

At this moment in time, I know that people – and I know it for sure, because as a lawyer I see it – people do not fully believe in justice. They do not fully believe that such justice can be restored, because international organizations are working slowly and the whole world in general is slow, because, let's face it, the war isn't affecting Poland or other countries, although we are very grateful to them for helping us. However, to stop, to realize that it will be possible to do this only when there will be an expeditious investigation and prosecution of those criminals. This very fact can stop – at least in the minds, and this is the beginning – can stop these crimes in the minds of Russians. And I think that would be a good start.

And, you know, without liability, the burden of this memory will live on in the heart of Europe and will be passed down through the generations. And if this instrument of justice is not created now, there will actually be such street justice, where people take matters into their own hands. But you know, in Ukraine justice and the rule of law are different word combinations, they are different words, although in English they are somewhat similar. Actually, justice is not exactly about the rule of law. But if we, through the social media, don't give … if we don't give society hope that this evidence can become the foundation of verdicts for these criminals, we will simply turn into… as they said, a war of all against all will begin. That is why there should definitely be a tribunal not only for those who started this war, but also for those who have been engaged in propaganda for years, because these people, they are the foundation of the crimes committed by Russia.

By the way, it is also about tacit consent. You know very well the Nuremberg trial, when the judges were on trial. They actually tried a judge who really believed that he couldn't leave that system of coordinates, and that he was, at least to his mind, trying to prevent this violence. But no, he was part of the system. And it means that all those who are currently working for Moscow, who are working in one way or another for that justice, they are, in fact, also criminals. And to give this, you know… to ostentatiously bring such a person to justice is important, because I, for example, want me and my children to realize, I want it written in the cortex of my children's brains, that whatever my crime was, moreover during the war, it will be investigated and these crimes will definitely be exposed, because we have a different system now, different technologies, and there's no possibility of simply hiding. Without this development of events, it doesn't matter which convention will be ratified by which countries.

Andrii Kulykov: You have one minute left.

Masi Nayyem: Today, with the prevalence of social media, the war documents itself, and these war crimes are committed in real time on the screens of millions of people. And we see it, and this is also another challenge for the justice system, which demands an adequate response, and mankind hasn't faced this experience before. Similar experiences, perhaps, but it hasn't had exactly this experience.

How to deal with it? During the Second World War – the Nuremberg trial – they did not have so many sources of information. Now we have such an opportunity. I think that at this time Ukraine, once again, will be able to prove and give a master class to the whole world on how this justice system can be changed. Because if we punish Russia now, and this is a big war, then I am sure that smaller wars will definitely document it and understand it, realize the importance of following these rules of war that humanity has accepted.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you, Masi. I think that Masi was very eloquent and he did put on the forefront the things that he thinks should come first. Let's hear from Philippe Sands – seven minutes.

Philippe Sands: Thank you. I don't know if I'll use the seven minutes. It might be a bit less. I suppose I just want to take as my theme, war crimes and mem-

ory. And I've listened to Masi with great interest. I have to say, I'm a little more sceptical about the place that justice can occupy in relation to the matters that we're addressing, whether it's this current war or the Anglo-American war against Iraq. Or the events in the former Yugoslavia, or Rwanda. Or going back even further in time to Vietnam, or to French colonial rule in Algeria, or to the troubles in Northern Ireland. Or to the terrible events between 1939 and 1945, which engulfed this city, this incredible city which we're in. Which hasn't even begun, seventy-five years later, to come to terms with what happened in this city. So the idea that criminal justice could suddenly be a panacea to prevent future crimes, to help us establish the facts, is, I think, problematic.

The idea of war crimes trials is very new. It really only began properly in 1945. The famous Nuremberg trial. War crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, crimes against peace. In the end, twenty-four people were indicted and prosecuted. And one of them committed suicide. One of them died. And three of them were acquitted. Much to the disgust of the prosecutors from Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. But the judges acted independently and did what needed to be done. And that famous trial told a story. It told a story of wrongdoing on an industrial scale. But we know it only told a part of the story, because it only dealt with the crimes that were perpetrated on one side of the story, and it left completely untold millions of crimes that occurred at the responsibility of other people in the story. That trial was accompanied by a series of criminal trials in many countries of Europe: in Poland, in the Soviet Union, in West Germany, in East Germany, in Italy. And you can gather thousands and thousands of examples. But the story that's told is an incomplete and a partial story.

That really became very significant for me when I came to the Lviv in 2014 with a man called Horst Wächter. Horst Wächter's father, Otto Wächter, lived in this city for three years, from 1942 to 1944. He was the Nazi governor of district Galicia, based in Lviv. And under his rule, working closely with Hans Frank, he oversaw the extermination of more than 1 million human beings, Poles and Jews. Otto Wächter was indicted for this by the Polish government in exile, and then the one that was the new government after '45, and by the US. But he was never caught. He escaped. He hid in the mountains outside Salzburg, in a place where his companion, a man called Buko Rathmann, who was a SS soldier, expert in survival and mountain strategies … A place that Buko told him the British and the Americans were too stupid and too lazy to go. Above 2,000 metres, hiding in mountain huts. After three years living up there – and I met Buko in 2016, and he told me what it was like to hide for three years in those ways – they decided to

separate. And Wächter made his way via Salzburg, eventually to Rome, where he was taken in by a Catholic priest and hidden in a monastery. He then died in mysterious circumstances in the summer of 1949.

I explored this story for many years working with Wächter's son, Horst. And a couple of years after I met him, I came with him and the son of Hans Frank, Nicholas Frank, to Lviv. And in this city, we had a conversation about the crimes of his father. He had been indicted. The evidence was overwhelming. Actually, I don't buy for a single minute that somehow the social media stuff is going to make it much easier to frame.

Andrii Kulykov: One minute.

Philippe Sands: I have no difficulty establishing the criminal responsibility of Otto Wächter. And then Horst said to me, 'But Philippe, my father was never caught. He was indicted, but he was never prosecuted. He never went through a trial. He was never convicted. And he died an innocent man. And you have to accept that, as a lawyer.' And that is the story of the twentieth century, and of the last twenty years. Not the twenty-four people who were sitting in the dock in Nuremberg. But the 24,000, or 240,000, or 2.4 million or more … people like Otto Wächter, who had some involvement. And this occurs on all sides of the story. The family could then live with the myth that he died an innocent man.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you, Philippe. Nataliya Gumenyuk, your seven minutes start now.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: I'll go very much to the point of the topic you already mentioned, social media. So first of all, social media, I believe, can make our life easier in particular [when it comes] to identifying the perpetrators, in particular because they are boasting – they are really boasting – on their social media, [about] where they were. So it makes the job of the investigators easier. At the same time, as somebody who, within the projects [that] I'll say more about a bit later, also works on the documentation, and as a journalist, I should also say that, of course I am concerned, because of course so many of the things which are on social media cannot be verified. And something which cannot be verified, cannot serve any purpose.

Moreover, I do think that there is a complication because the more we come to the people on the ground, in the villages and towns … I've been quite a few times one of the first journalists entering, you know, Bucha, Irpin, various villages in Chernihiv or in Izium and Balakliia … I do understand that a week after people start to tell the stories from the social media. Their stories they are not really their stories – they are stories from Irpin, they've travel somewhere. And it's very easy to create myth. Myths are always created in the wars. But I think the abundance of these myths, the amount of these myths, are really there.

At the same time, I'm not really the sceptic. I think for me as the journalist working and also coming to these places… And somebody who was very cautious about this role of social media for accountability of the journalist. I do understand that there is cyberbullying, that there is a pressure coming to the journalist. These are in part the reason for some self-censorship for the journalist. At the same time, I feel good because I know that anything I write will be fact-checked, maybe by a possible witness, by a person. And if I do a tiny mistake, they would undermine my credibility. So now I'm fact-checked, not by the fact-checkers and the editors, but by almost everybody, wherever I go. So I both appreciate it and I'm concerned.

At the same time, coming now to the second part of our discussion, which is about memory. To make the point, I probably need to explain how we work [and say something] about the project we do, which is called The Reckoning Project, together with Janine di Giovanni, the great American reporter who covered Syria and lots of wars, and also Peter Pomerantsev, who spoke earlier at the Festival. How we try to work for both memory and for the [present]. So what we really do – because I'm also very much concerned about the inflation of the term 'war crimes', which is everywhere, and when people use it all the time [it becomes] a buzzword, war crimes in particular. And now I started understanding, thanks to the project, what is a war crime, what is not, why is it difficult to prove. Why just the photo of the mass grave in the zoom serves no purpose, unless there is something behind that. That it's just emotional. So we have maybe a dozen journalists all over the country, and we develop the methodology in which we talk to the people who are potential witnesses or victims, in a way that is maybe more gentle than the prosecutors would do, but ask the very same question in a neutral way, [so] that their testimonies can be used to build the cases in the courts.

At the same time, they can be used for films, documentaries and large media projects. Of course, in the very same way the journalists work, but in the end also for the sake of memory. So out of these testimonies, maybe later there

would be a book, a play, a memorial or anything else. And this really helped me a lot, because I worked as a journalist in various wars and conflicts, and that's how I understood even more why we really need to document things as if we are researching the historical truth. Because I know this term is debatable, but I think that we are able to establish the historical truth. It's possible, in this moment. Because it's very hard, often, to return to the history and to find out what has happened. But we are doing this as the war is [unfolding]. I find this an interesting dilemma, because the journalists in our team, they all have the fear, sometimes – they are a bit worried that their journalistic job is for nothing; that it doesn't change the reality. So they really are very, very keen about the legal part. [So] that finally our journalistic [work] might be used somewhere.

At the same time, I see the fatigue from the lawyer – not fatigue, but this kind of anxiety of the lawyers, who also have very sceptical ideas that, 'Don't have very wishful thinking about justice. It won't be easy. Don't think you will punish everybody. That every perpetrator would be punished.' We care about the end result, the media. You know, we probably won't be successful in this court of public. So I do think that's very interesting that everybody's a bit frustrated. So in this combination, things might work.

But honestly, for me, the driving force… Well, there are two things. First of all, it's memory, because I do think that indeed the crime of denial is a crime against justice, and especially in the case of Ukraine. Ukrainians were denied, from 2014 the right to establish the truth because there were so many questions about Crimea's annexation, the Donbas, about all this fake news about the country. That Ukrainians feel particularly concerned that their truths won't be preserved and told. That the Russian propaganda…

Andrii Kulykov: One minute.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: That the Russian propaganda would misuse it. So I do think this part, this can also be combined. And probably the last point to say: at the same time, I still think that we should work both for future and for the present, because I think where the power is also, if we speak about things today, maybe there is a slight chance to prevent something. I don't think it's just about the advocacy. But despite the trials in absentia, I still believe that indictment and the probability of indictment might be something that might stop the impunity, at least for somebody. So that would be my thing, that we all need to combine – not overestimate, not have wishful thinking – but in combination, using every single thing, we might get some justice, though it might be very different for everybody.

Andrii Kulykov: Perfect timing, at least in the last minute. And passion and vigour, although you have to overcome huge difficulties when you work on these things. And, as Nataliya said, every word that she writes, every word that she shares with the audience may, and very often is, examined by other people who, as Masi said, have their own media, have the media of their own at the moment. We'll come to this later. Unless, of course, Jonathan Littell wants to dwell on this. Your seven minutes, sir.

Jonathan Littell: I won't dwell exactly on this. I don't think I'll even dwell on the question of justice. I mean, after all, the title of the panel is 'War Crimes and Memory', not 'War Crimes and Justice'. And, also, I think I'm even more of a sceptic about international war justice than Phillipe, given that I've been in many wars in my time. I've seen vast amounts of atrocities and I've seen very, very, very few people held accountable for this. And often, in many cases, the people – when there was some kind of legal process, who ended up in the dock was pretty random, and not necessarily the ones – unlike in Nuremberg, who were… it was the guiltiest people in the dock.

In the case of the LRA, for example, in the Uganda Civil War, the Lord's Resistance Army, the guy who finally ended up in ICC is a man called Dominic Ongwen, who was kidnapped as a ten-year-old boy, traumatised, indoctrinated, became a very senior field commander, committed many atrocities. But all the people who made him do that were never found, were never arrested. They died, they vanished. They were amnestied. And he's the one who was supposed to answer for everything that they all did, when he was just one of the victims, in fact, who then became a perpetrator. This is just one example.

But no, I would like to talk more about the memory aspect, which is in the title… As I said at the beginning, I don't really use social media. There's a good reason for that, because I just find the flux unbearable. I can't process it. And I also find it's not useful, unless it's curated. I mean, I will look at something like a post taken from social media that's been flagged by a journalist in an article, as you know, a piece of information which is useful, of course. But, take Bucha, you know, where Nataliya was one of the first people there, and where I worked a

bit later. OK, so you arrive in Bucha right after the Russians have left and you see bodies in the streets. Let's take, for example, the four bodies that were at the corner of Vokzalna and Yablunska, which I believe two had their hands tied behind their back, or maybe three, I don't remember exactly. And they were lying there. So, you take photos and these photos go out in social media and people see – what do they see? They see Russians have left Bucha and have left bodies in the streets, some of which are tied, which leads us to presume that they were executed after they'd been arrested, or something.

And that's as far as you can get with the form that social media allows you to have. It's this immediate impact, it's this immediate emotion. Or the eight guys who were shot behind the base further down on Yablunska. Or the lady that was found in her garden halfway in the middle of her house. Or the poor girl who was found naked in a fur coat in the basement. So you get this immediate impact and emotion, but you're going to know nothing about what actually happened just from this photo. Even if it's captioned, even if it tells you where it was, what the probable age of the person was. Even if it tells you maybe the name of the person. So really, you're only going to get anywhere when people do what is properly journalistic work, like what Nataliya does, or what I've done, to a much more limited extent. Which is you go and talk to people and you try to find out who is this person and how did he die or how did she die. What actually happened? What are the facts, what are the witnesses? What is the information available? And you build a story, which is a narrative made out of words. So it's no longer… you're shifting – I mean, you could do it on film, too. It's true. You can do a montage of interviews, of people through film, but often it's just done through writing.

And you build stories, and then these stories accumulate, and then sometimes people make books from the stories. Other times it just goes into newspapers. Or it can go back into social media through the different forms. It doesn't matter how it's disseminated. But what I'm trying to say is that the memory of the facts… For instance, I'll give a very short example, which I used in an article I wrote about Bucha. I met a young man whose father had been burned alive in a garage with several other people, and this young man didn't know exactly the circumstances. His father had left the house to go do something, and then phone communications were cut on 3 March, and his father never came back. And a friend of his father's who had seen him said, 'Yeah, he went out for cigarettes.' That's all he knew. Then the son and his mother evacuated. And later, when they came back, they were contacted by officials who say, 'We have a body from a burned garage and there are some identity papers. We can make out something. Is this your father?' And yes, it was his father.

So he took me to the garage and he's, you know, we're looking at this burnt garage and he's explaining – there were some other people there, I don't know who they were. And then a guy comes and asked us what we're doing. We explain and he's like, 'No, your father didn't die here.' And the kid is like, 'What? The police said he died here.' 'No, no, no, no. I lived forty years in this neighbourhood. I know everything that happened here. Come, I'll show you.' So he took us down through the garages to another garage, and he said, 'This is where your father died.' He knew the father.

And then other people started coming. And then people started arguing about what had happened in that garage, and how many people had died there. And the kid was completely distressed and like, 'Oh my God, I have to go back to the police, I have to sort this out, I don't understand, is it there, is it here?' And people had a long discussion for about half an hour – partly in Russian, partly in Ukrainian, so I could record a lot of it – about the facts. And there was a whole community, a whole neighbourhood getting together and trying to figure out what had happened, what were the facts. So, in fact, they were constructing the collective memory of that neighbourhood, of these crimes, in real time in front of me. They were comparing information they had. Some had seen things, others had been told things, nobody really knew. But, you know, this is how memory is made. This is at the most basic level, at the level of a small community, this group of buildings where all these people lived. And then that will expand, through recordings, through media, through newspapers or books into a much more collective memory. The whole community of Bucha and then the whole community of Kyiv region, and then Ukraine… it will solidify.

The trials, if ever there are trials and if they ever lead to anything, will indeed at least have an interesting advantage of fixing a record. This, for instance, for me is the whole point of the Yugoslavia trials. Is that at least we have a legal record that went through the legal processes that says, 'This happened and these people did this.' So it's a minimum incontestable record. Although the Serbs are very happy to contest it left, right and centre at any time they can, it still is considered established truth. But memory is much, much larger than what comes out at trials. Memory is much larger than what comes out in media. It can sometimes be imagined. It can sometimes be completely reconstructed. It can sometimes be very divergent.

Take, for instance, the memory of World War II in different parts of Ukraine, and you will have very different memories about the same events, without going into details, because we don't have time. So, this is the point I wanted to make; that I think stories are an integral part to memory, in all their different forms,

Top (from left to right): Andrii Kulykov, Nataliya Gumenyuk and Stanislav Aseyev
Bottom: Andrii Kulykov, Jonathan Littell, Nataliya Gumenyuk, Stanislav Aseyev and Philippe Sands

journalistic or narrative in a broader sense, or film or whatever. And they will contribute to forming memory, but memory is even bigger than that. I mean, about these crimes and the suffering.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you, Jonathan, not only for making this point, but also for illustrating it with a story, because, of course, history is made of stories. Stanislav Aseyev.

Stanislav Aseyev: I'll briefly express my opinion on social media. To my mind, social media is more harmful than useful in regards to war crimes. Why? It does help when it comes to identifying some people, but it also teaches us not to think. And, surprisingly to forget very quickly. I also wanted to provide this example. On 6 April, we were in Bucha and we saw a pile of bodies on Yablonska Street and two bodies, they were just, like, torn apart. And I think there were some four, maybe five bodies. Well, it's difficult to say because there were some remnants scattered around closer to trees and some angry dogs had already started eating them. And we took photographs and Denys Kazanskyi posted them to Telegram, because you cannot use Facebook for that, you will be blocked immediately. And it just went viral, even against the background of those mass burials near the church, and people started reposting this link even on Facebook. But the next day, when I decided to check social media, I saw that there was some kind of an investigation about corruption of one of the officials of the presidential office. And the people who just the day before had posted the link about those mutilated bodies – they no longer remembered any of it. Their social media was full of links to this case, the corruption investigation. This is a general problem of emotional intelligence, when you perceive what is happening very emotionally, but absolutely superficially. And tomorrow you will no longer remember what you posted the day before. So when we talk about an in-depth approach, about national memory in relation to war crimes, then I think the social media, in this case, it teaches people quite the opposite.

And the key message of mine is that war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine are a problem that is exclusively ours, and we have to be aware of that. There is no one who is going to solve it for us. Even if we imagine an ideal situation where Russia changes completely overnight and someone like Navalny or any other liberal comes to power – even then, no one will actually hand over these people to us. And I can give you a living example – my own example. You can see

before you a person who is currently participating in three trials linked to war crimes committed at Izolyatsia, the Russian concentration camp in Donetsk.

The first trial concerns the camp's administration. We know who those responsible are, we've identified them, and yet none of these people are in the courtroom, because they're not actually in the territory controlled by Ukraine. So this is a trial in absentia, which may at best in a few years lead to a verdict in absentia. The second trial concerns Brazhnikov, also accused of war crimes. But he's fled to the French Riviera. He sends us his greetings from there. And so he's not in the courtroom either, of course, and for two years there hasn't been a single court hearing, not even a preparatory one. And the third trial is for Palych, also known as Kulykovsky, the warden of Izolyatsia. He lived in Kyiv for two and a half years while I was still imprisoned in Izolyatsia, until I found out and alerted the Security Service, who were finally able to arrest him. And this is the only person from Izolyatsia who is currently accused under Article 438, and one of the key figures of war crimes, who is in the courtroom in person and whom you can, so to speak, see live.

That's why, and I apologize for the self-promotion, but that's why I pushed for the creation of the Justice Initiative Fund, our recently opened fund, set up to address the practical component of bringing war criminals to justice. For example, if you go to our website now, you will see the category 'Izolyatsia' and you will see all those people who are currently under the court process, who are not there and for whom we have assigned a reward.

Once again, these people are Ukraine's problem, and no one will hand them over to us unless we start looking for them ourselves. And no one will give us some intelligence or information which could be used to bring them to account without financial incentives. This is work that will take years, but we must understand that the experience of Israel, when they reached Nazi criminals even in Argentina, is the future that awaits Ukraine in the best case scenario. Because Germany was destroyed and it was forced to accept its responsibility. And we know that this is not going to happen with Russia, even when we win this war. So the question of getting to these people will be within Russia itself. They won't have fled to Argentina given, let's say, the social and financial status of those who committed crimes in Bucha or Izium. But this is our problem and we really need to get very practical about it. Do not think that international tribunals are going to help us in a practical sense. If you look at the practices of international tribunals over the past three decades, considering the genocide in Rwanda and war crimes in the Middle East and the Balkans, it's only a handful of people who've been convicted in person. And these were not the executors; these were not the people who raped or tortured other people and so on and so forth. Thank you.

Andrii Kulykov: Everyone, thank you. Stanislav has made poignant points about memory, although some of them may have not articulated this word. But it's all in bits and pieces and combines into the memories that we will try to preserve. And, proceeding from what you, lady and gentlemen have said: on the one hand, yes, there is immediacy in social networks' reactions, and then it lapses. On the other hand, when we come to the issue of forgiveness, or forgetting, it's a field where people can contact each other. Avoiding the mediators – the mediators of mass media, authorities, public organizations, and so on and so forth. Is this the way forward if we're seeking memory, forgiveness and forgetting? Nataliya. Yes, please.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: You mentioned the term mediators, but I think that – I'm speaking as a journalist, first of all – I do think that the role of mediator cannot be dismissed, because often the journalist is the one being a mediator. Is the one who first needs to establish the truth. I sincerely believe it's possible to establish facts and truth. I know that the case in a lot of discussions the term is debatable. Can there be historic truths? There are different versions of truth. I still believe there is some kind of truth we can agree that this affects. Jonathan made a case about the story of people coming together and discussing. There should be, maybe, somebody who would initiate that. That might not be a journalist. But very often, if you are there, you are the ones who establish and record, but also give different voices.

So, for instance, we are now researching and we have some analysts, and our journalists are asking… They are investigative reporters, they're reporters with experience, and they're sometimes saying, 'But what if sometimes there are contradictory views?' For instance, we're looking at the case of the attack on the Kramatorsk train station. And what I understand from the researchers, and even lawyers, saying, 'It's actually OK, don't be afraid of contradictory views because it means that they're real people and we need to establish.' The more voices you have, the more you understand what's there, at what time, what's there. Because really, just by talking to a number of people, I understood that for one guy who was traumatized, he blamed the rescue team for coming too late because he thought that it [took] too long. When I talked to others, I un-

derstood [it took] eight minutes. But for him it was so traumatic that it felt like it was hours and hours.

There was another story, from what I understand that, for instance… I have the debate between the members of the community, the village in the Kherson region, where the head of the community was for some time detained and became so traumatized that he could not get back to his community. At the same time, some volunteers and the active citizens from this community are very offended that he's not coming back. They think he's a traitor. It's happening now. And what I understood then is that it's just so important to really make these people talk, and to talk to both of them. And that's exactly the journalistic role.

Trying [to be brief], I remember I was also in Yahidne. It's quite a known place in Chernihiv region where there is a village, where there is a basement – 370 Ukrainians were kept there for one month. And we filmed the story when the people in the village gathered to discuss it… we were just there, outside. And they have the meeting of the people who finally met in nicer circumstances around the table, remembering their experience. And then I understood, not by interviewing, but having this interaction – all of sudden they started, out of bits and pieces, to create this mosaic of what had happened. They had a discussion about some people who might be alleged collaborators, and someone said: 'Thanks to these people, I was able to get out and get my things.' And then you understand that's how, exactly like Jonathan explained, memory was created. And I do think that this is an incredible role. We cannot do that, there should be a mediator. There should be somebody who establishes and who records.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much. Nataliya managed to squeeze a very important point and a very moving story into three minutes. And hereby I establish three minutes as the time limit for the next interventions. Masi, is it possible for you to comment on this, and on to what extent involvement in social media might promote or might help people find common views, common ground, and common movement forward. Thank you.

Masi Nayyem: Regarding the last question, you're probably familiar with what Franklin said about the fact that if you don't have your own sense, society will fill it. You know that in the early days of the war, on social media, we 'won the war', quote unquote, right? Which pushed other people to believe that, in spite of the fact that we have the second-largest Army in the world against us, it made us

believe that it could still be possible for us to win. So, I think social media is an important component that we shouldn't disregard when we are constructing social standards and values and so on. Why? Because this is the reality we live in. People spend a lot of time on Facebook, Instagram, other platforms, Telegram… and we shouldn't neglect this fact.

But I agree that it's not enough to simply read about the fact that an atrocity took place somewhere. You know, do what you like. But when you're looking at corpses, seeing them in photos, this is obviously a highly uncomfortable feeling. It might cause disgust; it might cause hatred. But this information is insufficient. What is really lacking is this story of, you know, the story behind the corpses, about the rapes and the killings, which will then become the basis of a society that wins. And what kind of society will that be? That, to me, is the main thing: the consequences that this war will leave once it's over. Because it seems to me that some wars continue and continue, and will continue to continue, because people don't understand the consequences. Yes, we understand the pain here and now, of course. But you know, it's similar to stating that a broken arm is a problem. The broken arm itself isn't all that bad; far worse is how you'll live the rest of your life with a hand that doesn't work the way it should.

In this sense, I disagree that social media is doing something wrong. I think these are the stories that we did not tell and that were not told to us in the 1940s and the 1950s and the 1960s, about the people who survived World War II or survived the Holocaust. How did they return to normal life? What were the consequences for them? I feel there's a huge gap there, because I was actually looking for, and could not find, research on the effects of this war. And in this case I think, frankly speaking, social media will do more heavy-lifting than the historians, who will need time to write this history, to write their books, to think through the meanings and consequences of the war.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you, Masi. Please comment on this aspect about the social networks and direct contacts. Yes, Philippe.

Philippe Sands: I'd like to come back to what Nataliya was saying, which was very important, and it is inspired partly by Jonathan's comments – what you said about facts and truth. We are here in a book festival and we can talk, I think, quite openly. I've spent thirty-five years litigating cases of mass murder and atrocity. I have seen, like Jonathan, probably also like Nataliya, a great

number of mass graves, and I've been involved in a great number of cases. My sense, I'm realizing, as Nataliya was talking, is that the relationship with facts and truth tends to depend on whether you perceive yourself as a victim or as a perpetrator. And victims tend to have rather more of a desire to establish the facts and the truth. I'm thinking, since we're at a book forum, of a remarkable book by the Polish historian Jan Gross called *Neighbors.* Where he, as a Polish man, uncovered the story of what a group of people had done in a Polish village, Jedwabne, to their neighbours. The neighbours didn't like this. The descendants of the neighbours didn't like this. The descendants of the victims were thrilled to establish the facts. And this is not a far away issue. Right now, for very understandable and correct reasons with what is going on, Ukraine and Ukrainians are on the receiving end of some terrible criminal acts. It is entirely right to want to establish the facts and the truth.

But only twenty-five kilometres from where we are sitting, there is a small town called Zhovkva. And on the outskirts of that town, there is a place in the woods with water and reeds in which 3,500 people were killed on a single day on 25 March, 1943. And I've spoken to the mayor of that town as to whether it wishes to mark what happened when half of the town was killed in a single day. And who was responsible for that act. But perhaps understandably, with the passage of time, the desire to establish the facts and the truth is not so strong. I think the same thing happens in many countries around the world, including the United Kingdom and France, of which I am a national of both countries. But I think we should express some caution in understanding which people in which circumstances, at what time and why, wish to establish the facts and the truth. It is a complex picture.

Andrii Kulykov: This was one of the aspects mentioned in the previous discussion conducted by Professor Hrytsak. And there was a bit about historical memory and all this kind of stuff. Nataliya.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: There was something peculiar: when we started to record the testimonies according to the standard we established … we had the training [and] we were raising our concern as journalists. [We wondered], what if the victims or witnesses would lie to overdo things?

Andrii Kulykov: By the way, one of the terms that is coming in to use is 'survivors'. Not necessarily 'victims'.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: We probably speak more on the legal term, Andrii, so I use this term because it's like in the court case. But I agree.

And what was interesting was that we were all, as journalists, asking ourselves: what would happen if the people who lived through something horrible would overdo [their accounts]. Because it's something we feel natural in the media. What I became very interested in, is that, often, the people we met – this is my feeling and the feedback from the last months – the people are more cautious than the journalist. To be very clear in what they say. To give an example: talking to a man whom I know, in the village of Lukashivka in Chernihiv region. He was put on his knees, blindfolded and I knew that – he was a civilian from the village, but then there was a soldier, a Ukrainian soldier, who was shot. And when I was calling this man asking like, 'Have you experienced this story? Did you see …? And he's like, 'I didn't see. I heard. The guy was shot and then I saw him dead, but I didn't see.' He was correcting me, which I find very good, as a journalist. And very often I find people also telling me, 'But look, in our village they were not that bad, you know? This one guy, he kind of pushed me on the floor and saved me.'

My guess is – I don't think this is Stockholm syndrome or anything. I'll really briefly mention this. I think for the last eight years, Ukrainians so often were pushed into a situation of misinformation and the stereotypes, that there is something in Ukraine – and they lived through this massive Russian propaganda about them – that they need to talk to their relatives in Russia always to prove that they are real, the atrocities are real. That they're very concerned that they would be dismissed. So what I understand is that a lot of Ukrainians who witnessed or survived or experienced something are just really very cautious [to ensure] that their truth won't be denied. That they're not really overdoing [their account]. Mainly because of this reality they have lived for many, many years, with a huge enterprise trying to deny their truth when things are unfolding already.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much. On my part, I think that part of the problem is that we were exerting so much effort to convince ourselves that the war is somewhere distant. We even called it 'the war in the east of Ukraine', not ad-

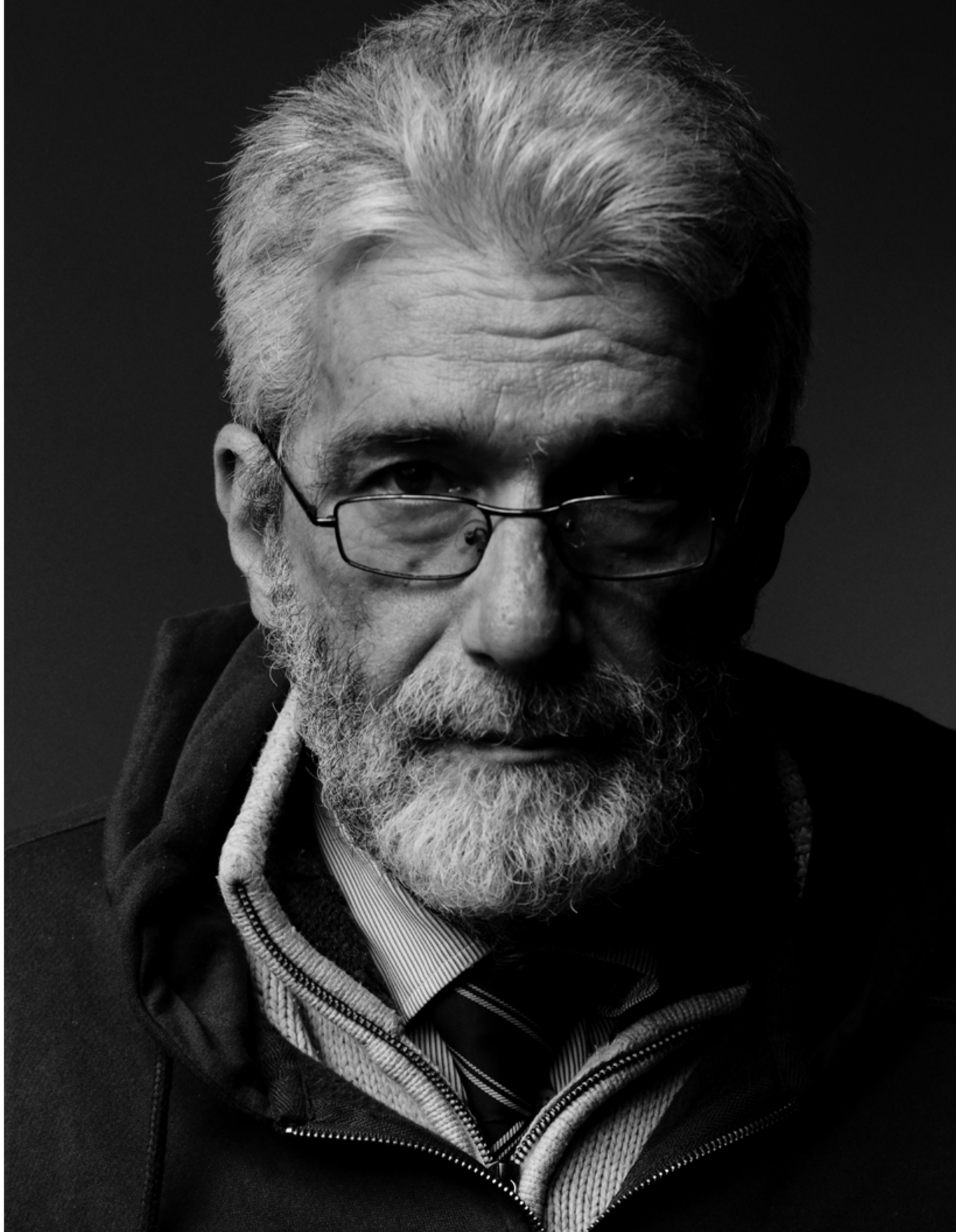
mitting that this was war for the entire Ukraine. Now that we – well, I say 'we' – we face this on our doorstep, in our towns and so on, we are still trying to push it away, like it didn't happen sometimes. And by the way, history proves that it is sometimes, and quite often, more difficult for the perpetrator to forgive than for the victim. Because perpetrators in the depths of their conscience very often understand that they were doing wrong, and terribly wrong. And that's why they do not forgive the victims. And they say, 'We were provoked', and all this kind of stuff.

We're now coming to the end of our panel because I want to leave some time for questions from the audience. But before this, since Philippe mentioned the Troubles… Several years ago, I spoke to two people who used to be on different sides of the divide. One of them was a loyalist, one of them was a Republican. But by that time, some seven years ago, they were already for three years working together in a community network, trying to re-establish what once had been. And I asked them when did they stop killing. And I asked them separately. They did not hear what the other one said. And in both cases the answer was not 'When I understood that future war is dangerous for the well-being of our society,' or that, 'It threatens the nation', or whatever. 'It is against any human ideas or humanistic values' or so on. They both said: 'When we got tired of shooting, when we got tired of killing.' And the question to the panellists is: when will the killing of civilians in this war end? And how will it be remembered? Philippe starts.

Philippe Sands: Wow. Who knows? Could be over tomorrow. Bullet to Putin's head. Someone takes over and says, 'It was all that guy's fault, and we'll just round up these seven people and send them to The Hague and get them put on trial.' Or we could gather again in sixteen years' time, and it's still going on. I have no idea.

Andrii Kulykov: All right. Thank you. Masi, when is this war going to end? And the killings of civilians? And what about the memories that we are going to have? Philippe mentioned about sixteen years. Well, what about your perspective… In sixteen years? What might it be?

Masi Nayyem: Well, the war will end when it ends, but the killing of civilians will not end. And it seems to me that it is going to happen, or possibly it can



happen when, one by one, at least some critical minority of Russians admit to their crimes, the genocide against Ukrainians. It seems to me that then maybe we, Ukrainians, will start thinking of peace as something that is possible in the future. But all this will be remembered, I think it should be remembered, I don't believe it will… but it should probably be remembered by the sincere forgiveness that we'll grant the Russians. Maybe if Russia really stops, understands, realizes. I mean, political Russia will understand, become aware of those crimes. I can only believe this, and this is the only way I would like it to be remembered. That is, the war will not end even when Russia loses. I think the war, the war will only happen there, you know, it will go in another circle, but really when the Ukrainians forgive, if they forgive, then maybe this day will be remembered, but I have little faith.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you, Masi.

Jonathan Littell: About the win, I have no more idea than Philippe, so I'll just take the issue from a different side. There's one thing we haven't really talked about in this whole discussion from many different aspects of the construction of memory, the future construction of memory about these crimes. We're at a stage right now where an army of people – Nataliya and many, many others – are establishing facts. We're getting a very clear and detailed picture of what happened where. We're building huge files. We're mapping. This information, the broader it gets, does allow us to look at patterns. For instance, we can already draw some conclusions about patterns of bombing of civilian areas. And these conclusions about patterns would lead us to draw conclusions about intentionality. But one thing we don't have yet, and we're not going to have for a very long time, I think, is an understanding of the reasons behind the crimes that we saw in the Kyiv area that we're now discovering in the newly liberated areas east of Kharkiv.

I know many, many people in this room are certainly convinced that this is an intentional decision of the Russian government to commit genocide against Ukrainians. I know Philippe Sands doesn't agree with this idea. I know there are other explanations. What I really know is the fact that we don't know. What we don't know is the balance between the intentionality of the senior levels and the senior command of the Army. And what is very typical – and I have huge experience with this with the Russian Army: chaos, lack of discipline, alcoholism, poverty, mental illness, lack of command and control, and many other

factors that allow soldiers to run completely riot in a war situation, and commit horrendous atrocities without accountability, but without anybody particularly telling them to do it either. They're just doing it because they want to do it. And we don't know what the balance is. Certainly the explanation is somewhere between the two. But we don't know, we don't know where the *curseur* is, as we would say in French, where the slider is. And I think that's an equally important question that's going to have to be explored for many years. Trials of people who can testify; perpetrators would certainly bring information to the table to answer this question. But it's an equally, if not even more, important question to understand why they're doing these things. I'll stop there.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much. Stanislav.

Stanislav Aseyev: Well, the practice of my life shows that the perpetrator stops only when being stopped. I think that's all I wanted to say.

Jonathan Littell: I agree.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you. Nataliya

Nataliya Gumenyuk: Andrii, you ask the question about the murder of the civilians. Unfortunately, I would – the murder of the civilians is part of this war. It's part of the intentions overall – it's the way to wage the war. For instance, speaking about the bombardment of the cities. So that's the point.

I think it will end, at some point… I agree: when the perpetrators are stopped. At the same time, I think for us, it's the moment when the Ukrainians understand that there is a genuine guarantee for their security. 'Genuine' is a very difficult term, but genuine. I think we would understand it as a people.

I want to end on what we have spoken about memory, just to highlight that. Sometime ago we were on the same panel with Olesia Matviychuk, who just received a Nobel Peace Prize, together with Memorial. And her main thing was always [saying], 'I don't want to be in Memorial because I'm not a historian. I'm a human rights defender. I cooperate with Memorial, but we really need to stop

it earlier.' So on your question: when? I don't think that there is [an] answer anywhere, because it depends on us today. It depends on how much could be invested today in order to stop it. As soon as possible, if we do everything which is possible.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you very much and give her a big hand. [Audience applause] And this, of course, applies to all the participants. A question from this lady and I think we'll round up with this.

Audience member: Thank you very much. Thank you to BookForum. I heard [the defence lawyer] Ilia Novikov say for the first time, back in March, that these crimes which are taking place in Ukraine, they will be heard by Ukraine, of course, as well. That was the idea, that it's not about any newly created institutions because we haven't had our justice court reform completed. And do we also need a new terminology, because we have sacralised, for example … we had the sacred places, sacred burial places for the Jews, and churches. We have the notion of genocide and crimes against humanity that didn't exist before World War II. What about the new concepts or notions that are going to pop up after this war? Because some historians think that the term 'deportation' is not a correct thing to be applied to Ukraine, because it might mean a different thing.

Philippe Sands: In international law, it is first and foremost for the country which has jurisdiction over the crimes, Ukraine, to exercise that jurisdiction. It is only if Ukraine cannot, is unwilling, or is unable to exercise jurisdiction that you go to the international level. In relation to three categories of crimes – war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide – Ukrainian courts can exercise jurisdiction, and I think they will seek to exercise jurisdiction. And you don't need any new international instances.

There is going to be a very big fight coming, because the International Criminal Court wants to be able to prosecute certain people. Quite why Ukraine would hand senior people over to the International Criminal Court? I don't know, when Ukraine has a perfectly fine functioning criminal justice system in terms of dealing with these issues. The gap in the system which exists, in relation to your question, is on a single crime, and that is the crime of aggression. Which,

for me, is the most important of all the crimes. It's not genocide, it's not crimes against humanity, it's not war crimes. Why? This war is manifestly illegal. If the war had not happened, there would not be any of these other crimes. The courts of Ukraine have jurisdiction over the crime of aggression and they could exercise it. The problem is that such an exercise would be in relation to a crime which is called a 'leadership crime'. It's the only one of the four crimes which goes straight to the top table: Putin, Lavrov, Shoigu and probably a dozen or so other people who are implicated in the decision to start the war, to continue the war, to conduct the war, and so on and so forth. I think the government of Ukraine, wisely, has understood that the perceptions around Europe and the world of its legitimacy to use its domestic legal system to put those people on trial will be put in question. And so what it has done is supported and called for the creation of a special criminal tribunal, a new institution to be created at the international level. And the processes for that are underway now.

The one final point I would make is that we've all become very aware in this terrible conflict, war, that there is a gap in the architecture, and that is in relation to the protection of the environment. That the existing rules of international law do not adequately deal with attacks on nuclear facilities, attacks on dams…

Andrii Kulykov: Philippe, I'm being reminded that we have only four minutes left and we still have one question unanswered.

Philippe Sands: I'll just finish then by saying the crime that may emerge from this war is a new crime called 'ecocide'.

Andrii Kulykov: All right. Fair point about the terminology, sacrilege and all this. No comment, Jonathan? No? Masi, what about you? Because you are a lawyer. Maybe you have some comment or an answer as far as the first question is concerned about courts.

Masi Nayyem: Everyone understands that before we start this process, it's very important to have high quality evidence. And we have the courts, it's very important. But what about this presumption that we could be biased, because we are in Ukraine and these crimes were committed against Ukrainians? Is it

not very important for this story to be taken on an international level? To have some support from the international community, for people not to accuse us of making up all of these stories [as a result of] being biased because we suffered so many losses as a nation. That is why it does seem very important that it is not only our courts who are involved in this process, but also international courts.

Nataliya Gumenyuk: It's very important to respond to Masi. I agree about this international position, but I think the aim would be, really, to [build] trust in the Ukrainian courts. There is no way… I don't think anybody would handle the capacity of what has happened, with this amount of cases. We trust French courts, we trust German [courts]. The ultra-aim would be that the Ukrainian courts would be trusted. Not transferring it to somewhere, because then it's like a no-way gain.

Andrii Kulykov: Thank you all very, very much. We have spoken about memory, although sometimes we haven't articulated this word. We have spoken about justice, although it is rightly noted by Masi, and some other participants, the word 'justice' in Ukraine has a slightly different meaning from the meanings it has in English. We have spoken about forgiveness and forgetfulness, and I guess that to forgive does not necessarily mean to forget. And to forget actually never means to forgive, because when you have forgotten about something, you deny that this has actually happened. And then you deny the necessity to even think about forgiveness. And we are thinking people. We are people who are in need of trust. And what Nataliya and all the participants in this panel do is they provide the hard proof of what is happening now. It is a meticulous job. It is a job that should be done with care and carefulness. And part of this job was done before your eyes just now. Thank you, everyone, and I wish you good work in the future days of the BookForum. It's eight p.m., right on the spot. Thank you, everyone.

Margaret Atwood in Conversation with Yurko Prokhasko

Yurko Prokhasko: Good evening. My name is Yurko Prokhasko, and I have been invited to moderate this conversation, the final conversation of today, 8 October 2022, at the 29th BookForum in Lviv. I was invited to hold this conversation with Margaret Atwood. Welcome, Margaret Atwood.

Margaret Atwood: Hello, lovely to see you.

Yurko Prokhasko: Hello, Margaret. It is 8 October here in Lviv, where I live and where I find myself at this moment, and I think the time is 8.17 p.m. Where are you? Where and at what time has this conversation caught you, Margaret?

Margaret Atwood: Yes, it is a little past one in the afternoon, and I am in Toronto, Canada, which if you look at a map, it's kind of in the middle. Well, it's just on Lake Ontario.

Yurko Prokhasko: Fortunately, not a sadistic time, as sometimes happens with our colossal time difference between East Central Europe and North America. I am a Ukrainian essayist, translator, Germanist and psychoanalyst, which, of course, they're almost one and the same – a translator and psychoanalyst. And Margaret Atwood is one of the most outstanding, most important and most influential authors of our time, our common modernity, where we all live in the midst of our common modern world, and not only its English-speaking part, which, after all, is also huge, but not only its English-speaking part.

And I know very well why I accepted this invitation to speak with Margaret Atwood today. I accepted it because I have many questions for the author. Not all these questions are mine. A lot of my buddies, friends, and acquaintances have delegated many different questions to you, Margaret. Those people who are unable to ask you these questions themselves, but who would like very much

to do so. And this also explains why I could not resist the temptation to accept this invitation, although I have almost no direct experience of the Anglo-Saxon world, which is native to you; nor am I fluent enough in English to read your original works, Margaret Atwood. And even more so, I don't want to cause you such a terrible embarrassment, actually, as one of the greatest masters of the English language in the modern world, as speaking to you in my imperfect or at least insufficiently proficient English, so our conversation today takes place in translation and through translation. And so, in translation and with translation, we will try to understand each other in the world where it is so, so incredibly difficult to understand each other.

Well, I have so many questions that if I had to ask them all, the time framework of our conversation would look something like this – you, Margaret, would have about a minute and a half for each answer. But this is the last kind of torture I would like to inflict on you, and that is why I tried to select questions, to choose those issues that seem to me the most important. And in the end, questions are questions, but you never know how the conversation will flow. Maybe we will start the conversation in such a way that my questions won't be necessary, and maybe you would like to ask something? Questions are questions, but it is quite possible, and this also happens, probably infrequently, but it happens that you, accepting this invitation, already knew what you wanted to speak about. Maybe, at least for the introduction. Maybe you have some intention, some need, some message, and you can only dream that, Lord, send me interlocutor who is smart enough, who will not bombard me with his prepared questions, but will give me the opportunity to say what I think, what I consider necessary and appropriate. So I want to ask, actually, maybe it is so, maybe you want to say something now?

Margaret Atwood: I can say, hello. I can say, I'm happy to be there with you. And I can say that right now Ukraine is the most important spot on the map of the world.

Yurko Prokhasko: Is that the reason you accepted the invitation to this conversation? Is that what made it interesting to you?

Margaret Atwood: Well, I think it's very important right now for writers, in particular, to support the idea of open discourse. And a world in which the kind

of censorship and suppression of people that we are seeing elsewhere in the world is not seen as the desirable way to be in this world.

Yurko Prokhasko: As far as Ukraine is concerned, and the fact that it is that spot that now speaks a lot about itself, about what's happening in Ukraine, through Ukraine, around Ukraine. If it is an important embodiment of what is happening in the modern world, of the condition of this modern world that we share, in what way, would you say, do Ukraine and the events of Ukraine express the state of the world? What kind of world do we live in now?

Margaret Atwood: For someone my age – I was born in 1939, two months after the outbreak of World War II, so for someone my age, this is like a reprise of the middle of the twentieth century in which there is a huge conflict between totalitarianisms on the one hand, and democracies on the other. So for me, it brings back a lot of those childhood memories. So if I was born in 1939, you can say that I spent my entire young childhood in World War II … in Canada, lucky me, but nonetheless, the atmosphere, the mobilization, you know, everybody had relatives who were in the Army. There was a lot of bad news, at the beginning it was very tense and it was very tense all the way through. So I've been following it very closely and with a lot of anxiety, because I think I spent the early part of my life in a state of anxiety. Also, when grown-ups weren't telling you things. You knew there were things that were wrong, but you didn't know what they were, so that makes you very anxious. And I can already imagine how many traumatized people there are going to be. Whatever the outcome, there are going to be a lot of people for whom this has been probably the worst thing in their life, and also a very important thing in their life. So how will this all resolve? And I will be very interested to see what writers write about this in the future. We hope there will be a future. That's the other thing you don't know. I have a little book here which just came out. It's called *Writing from Ukraine* and it goes since 1965. So, for English speakers who are watching this, this is a little beginning for you, you can get this book, it's Penguinn and here it is.

Yurko Prokhasko: Thank you very much. Do I understand you correctly that you were involved in the appearance of this book?

Margaret Atwood: No, I wasn't. I'm a reader of this book.

Yurko Prokhasko: But do I understand that you would see yourself among those writers who, after this war, might have something to say or something to write?

Margaret Atwood: Those will be Ukrainian writers. Those will be people actually involved and close to the situation, so … anyway, I'm too old. By the time we know how it all comes out, I'm probably going to be in an old age home. It's the younger writers who will do this. And if I am still reading books, I will read those books when they come out. I expect some people are already writing them.

Yurko Prokhasko: I know how important to you is personal memory, personal biography, the circumstances of your life. Again and again, you refer to them, again and again they are a constant point of reference and inspiration for you. And you've just mentioned this experience, on the one hand, of the memory of the mid-twentieth century, when already the lines were drawn for a great tension, and perhaps a great battle – the battle for life and death – between democracies and authoritarian states. And you mentioned that what is happening in today's world, our common world, which we share regardless of age, regardless of language, regardless of having or not-having certain experiences… You say you will not write about this war because you are not involved, but you are involved in this world we share. And of course, you are very much part of our time. Then I would like to ask … and you say that it reminds you of this experience of anxiety of a young child to whom the adults will not say what's going on. Or perhaps they will not say because they want to protect the child, or perhaps they don't say because they don't know or they don't understand what's going on.

Margaret Atwood: Yes, more like that. So, of course, in a war, you don't know what's going to happen. There are always surprises and you cannot predict outcomes. You can follow directions, but you cannot say for sure, any more than anything else in life, that this will be the result. So that's where the anxiety comes in. Yes, I think possibly I could put together a little reading list about World War II, as I've got quite a big library about it. And Graeme Gibson, who was my partner, his father was a general in the Canadian Army in World War II.

So I have those records, I have those papers. And people just didn't really know. And, like this one, you know, when you're actually there in the situation, it's chaos. I mean, you really don't have an overview. So that's clear from reading the reporting of that time, and it's clear from reading the reporting of this time. Anyway, we are all following it very closely. So if I were to write about it, it would be about the state of mind of people. I'm not the only person who wakes up in the middle of the night and turns on my phone to see what happened, because it's already been a lot of daytime by the time I get up in the morning. So I have to open it up and see what happened today, even though for me it isn't today yet – it is today for you, you've already had this day, I'm in the middle of it. So I think we're all, sort of, scanning through to see what the big news of the day was or is. I could certainly write about that part and that as the shared experience. And a lot of people are doing that.

Yurko Prokhasko: I'm also imagining that you could write about it in a different way, because you embody what we can call the gift of dystopia. If in the modern world we could have a name, you know, a nickname, then this gift of dystopia would be called Margaret Atwood. *[Margaret Atwood laughs]* And you are writing about these worlds you've never visited before. But by the power of your gift, this dystopian gift, or maybe it is through your talent, you have this ability to describe these places and spaces that you've never visited. Or maybe you have visited them.

Margaret Atwood: Yes, so the dystopias that I've written are part of a long tradition of dystopic writing. It goes back to H.G. Wells, and it continues through a writer called Yevgeny Zamyatin, who wrote a book called *We* in the early part of the twentieth century – he was unable to publish it in Russia, needless to say, because it more or less predicted Stalin – and then continued through Huxley and through Orwell and through Ray Bradbury. And I read all of those books when I was a teenaged person. And as you know, what you read when you're a teenage person, often has quite an influence on you. So that is part of my interest.

Part of my interest comes through history and in particular through the study of a real-life utopia that was begun in the seventeenth century and turned into the United States of America. And we forget that did not begin as a democracy. It began as a seventeenth-century Puritan theocracy. So the other true thing is that everything human beings do comes from an aspect of human nature.

So, as human beings, we can be very, very good. We can also be very, very bad. And our desires, our fears, our technologies, these are what shape the worlds that we build. And we can also say that there's an oscillation between societies that emphasize we, everybody together, and societies that emphasize I, the individual. If it's too far in the direction of 'I', you get very, very selfish situations in which there are a few very, very rich people and a lot of very, very poor people, and that is not sustainable ultimately. If we go too far in the direction of 'we', we're going to be suppressing the individual, stifling individual talent and initiative and producing a lot of people who are scared to do anything, because they don't want to be conspicuous. They don't want to stand out because that invites persecution. So I've also been reading recently quite a lot about the Chinese Cultural Revolution, a very instructive event, but not unique in history. There are these moments of moral panic and chaos in which things are just out of control and you don't want that either. You don't want total control and you don't want out of control. So I sometimes draw a little diagram that's round: up at the top there's totalitarianism; down at the bottom, there's chaos. And through the middle, there's what we could call the 'temperate zone', when you can actually have a life. And on the right and on the left, there's an arrow going up to totalitarianism. You can get there either way. And on the right and on the left, there's an arrow going down towards chaos. You can get there either way. And there's a great big arrow going from chaos straight up to totalitarianism. You skip the middle part because when things are too chaotic, you just want somebody to come in and fix it, you know – make this stop. And that seems to be our pattern as human beings.

We're doing an online programme right now called Practical Utopias, in which the participants get together and try to figure out how they would make things better. Not perfect, but better from the material standpoint: housing, food, energy, clothing… how do you dispose of your corpse? And also from the point of view of governance. And I expect that the arguments are going to come in the governance portions because people have quite different ideas. And you have to ask them, finally, some hard questions. Which are: what do you do if some people disagree with you? How are you going to handle that? Oh, well, let's see what they say.

And we are living in a very peculiar time right now. We have a number of challenges that are all converging. One set of challenges is produced by the climate crisis, and the other set of challenges is produced by conflicts over governance – how are going to conduct ourselves? What sort of world do we wish to live in? And if we wish to live in this world of our choice, how are we going to bring it about?

Yurko Prokhasko: There is definitely some comfort in chaos, and times when chaos brings great pleasure, it is the pleasure of unlimited possibilities or the pleasure of destruction. But at the same time, chaos can also cause this great fear, cold fear inside of you. And you are talking about the voices of adults, which are of paramount importance in such times, about this importance of the presence of grown-ups who could explain what is happening, interpret events, and give you some guidelines. And here comes the problem, the crux of the matter. We are adults now in such terrible times. And we are also scared, and we look around and we ask, who are the adults now? Who are those adults who can explain this world to us? Who can give us an explanation of what is going on? Who can soothe us and alleviate our fears? Who are those adults in today's world?

Margaret Atwood: Who are they? You're asking me?

Yurko Prokhasko: Well, yes. I am asking because, you know, we are adults. We should feel like adults in our age and our world; we are the adults, but we are still scared. So who can be the embodiment of this adulthood? Is there even such an institution as 'adulthood'?

Margaret Atwood: Well, I think that's in the realm of 'let's find out'. There are a lot of people writing intelligently about the situation. But they're usually commentators, so they don't have any actual power. They have the power of influence, but they're not the people making the decisions. So, what can we say? On the one hand, there are a lot of questions about the conduct of wars, and in those areas, I generally listen to military logisticians. People who count things. Partly because that's part of my historical background, and partly because the ones that I have been following, have been right so far.

I have a friend who ran a television programme called Survivor Man. And Survivor Man would put himself into remote situations with, you know, some matches, a knife, a water bottle, and then he would make a show about how he would survive. And he also wrote a book about people who found themselves in very difficult circumstances, such as in a plane crash in the Andes and how they got out of it. And he said you need four things. You need knowledge and experience, you need the right equipment, you need willpower, and you need luck. And two of these crash victims walked out of the crash and got help for the others. They

had no knowledge and experience. They had no right equipment. But they had willpower and they had luck. He said if you have only two of those things, you have a chance, if you don't have any of them, game over. If you have all four of them, you will definitely succeed.

So I tend to assess the situations from that point of view. Ukraine has got now knowledge and experience. The hard way, but they have it. They have, more, the right equipment. So, at the beginning, they didn't have right equipment. Now they have more right equipment. They have willpower. And it remains to be seen whether they will have luck. But at least they have three of those four things. So you can have three of them and also have bad luck, that's not out of the question. But people have succeeded despite, for instance, bad weather at the time of the Normandy invasion. The weather was bad. Nonetheless, they did it. Like that.

Yurko Prokhasko: Well, it seems to me that the situation is more or less such that, on the one hand, the search for these adults who know is probably the main temptation of autocracy, or the temptation to fall into a totalitarian utopia, the temptation to believe and trust, search for security, reliability, reference point. On the other hand, let's imagine that Ukraine won this war, what consequences could this have for democracy? Did this war in Ukraine reveal to us, expose to us, such a desolate state of democracy in the world? And does the victory in this war leads us to the conclusion that democracy in today's world – maybe not democracy as such, not the idea of democracy, but its institutions and the ways it exists in the modern world – must not be, somehow, protected post factum, but rather it should be reformed or remodelled to ensure it has better durability, better reliability, better resilience… So that we don't have to worry so much in the future?

Margaret Atwood: Well, in order to have a functioning democracy that isn't taken over by power-mad individuals, you have to build in a certain number of checks and balances. We all know that in totalitarianisms, a couple of things are taken over quite quickly. The judicial system becomes one with the government, and communications are taken over. So in order to have a democracy, you have to have open communications, and you have to have a judicial system that is not controlled by the government. It's not just a puppet. You, probably, like me, have seen footage of Stalin show trials, some of those people that didn't even know what they were accused of. They knew they would be found guilty, but they didn't know what of. This is why Kafka was so suppressed during those regimes. He

hadn't experienced those regimes, but in a way, he predicted them. You're guilty, but you don't know why, so that's a totalitarianism. Yes. So these are the things that have to be built into democracies. And someone said, 'Democracy is not perfect, it's just better than the others.'

And one of the things my Practical Utopias people are going to have to decide is, are you going to have a monarchy? Are you going to have totalitarianism? Are you going to have a committee of wise people? Are you going to have a democracy? If so, what kind? Is it going to be universal suffrage? People with property? All of these have been tried. Who gets to vote? All of these questions, which are always up in the air, you know, they're always in a state of moving back and forth. Anyway, interesting times. And when I wrote *The Handmaid's Tale,* which is now a television series, a lot of people at that time, 1995, said: 'Oh, don't be silly, Margaret. Nothing like that would ever happen in the United States.' That is because they had not read enough history.

Yurko Prokhasko: To come back to *The Handmaid's Tale,* I actually wanted to come back to it a little bit later, among other things, because, you know, in spite of all of the important books that you've written, I think three of your novels have been translated into Ukrainian, but your biggest fame here in Ukraine, can be put down specifically to the Netflix adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale.* A bit about that later.

Margaret Atwood: It's Hulu, not Netflix.

Yurko Prokhasko: Hulu not Netflix. I think that's what people know, what most people in this world know your work from Netflix, through the TV show. In any case, I wanted to talk about this a little more in a second. But before that, about this intersection, this almost rat king of aporias and challenges and disasters, all of which are becoming so tightly intertwined, and the intertwining is becoming clearer, day by day. It's clear that, you know, rather than start this war in Ukraine, it would have been much better to have taken care of, or to take care of, for instance, the climate, or to work together in solidarity to save or to prevent climate change. War is not only the emission of huge quantities of gases, of greenhouse gases, in an incredibly short period of time, which, of course, does not improve the climate situation at all; this war is above all a waste of time, which is so precious now. But might you have seen this war coming? Did

you feel things were heading in this direction? Perhaps you knew? Perhaps this wasn't a premonition for you, but structural knowledge.

Margaret Atwood: I did not know. I'm not a prophet. And I'm going to make you laugh very much right now, because it was planned – myself and my birdwatching partner, who is called Urban Birder, we had a trip planned to Chernobyl. It was going to be in February. Actually, it was going to be in March. And we had it all set up, everybody had signed up for it, we were very excited. We were going to pop into Chernobyl for a limited amount of time. There's a lot of birds there, or there were, and then we were going to spend the rest of our time in Ukraine going to different locations. And up until the middle of February we were saying, 'Oh, come on…' 'No, Russia will not…' 'No, that would be just too stupid…' 'No, nobody would do that.' And then we finally, about February the 20th, we said, 'We're going to have to call this trip off. Things are not looking good. It's getting too dangerous-looking.' So we were all set to go, we would have been there in March. And sooner or later, we'll reconstitute this trip, and then we'll be there, maybe. No, no, we didn't see it coming, but, you know, wishful thinking is very strong. You don't see it coming because you don't want to see it coming. And then you think, 'Surely not… nobody would be that stupid.' So I have to say, going the other way, it's always very stupid to invade Russia. Anybody who's ever invaded Russia has regretted it. It's very big.

Yurko Prokhasko: Yes, the power of denial and the power of suppression, which are perhaps the greatest human powers, and are obviously always with us. But I know very well that in your numerous interviews, it is very important for you to repeat and state that what you do in your creative works, what you also write and see and describe, is not foreseeing and is not any kind of prophecy. And yet – and it's amazing, it's something that really blows my mind – your descriptions of those imaginative worlds come true with amazing persistence, with amazing stubbornness, with incredible, unquestionable accuracy and thoroughness, and have come true for many decades. What is this about? What's the secret? Does it have to do with the structure of the modern world? In which it is so easy to read the main lines, the main trends, the main approaches, the main breaking points, that it's possible to sense, even if you don't cognitively want to know, but to sense? You know, when you suppress something, you repress something, you might still sense where it's going and where it will lead.

Margaret Atwood: Well, you only notice the ones that do come true. It's like fortune telling, so 'Oh, yes, the fortune teller was absolutely correct. I was going to meet a tall, dark stranger.' And we'll just forget about that short blond person that she also said I was going to meet, because that didn't happen. So we tend to select in favour of, you know, confirmation; biased confirmation. So I would say, for the 1990s, I would say that *The Handmaid's Tale* was becoming increasingly irrelevant, because things were not going in that direction. It seemed to be rather after the fall of the Berlin Wall, after the end of the Cold War, that they were going in the other direction. That we were not going to have *1984*, we were going to have *Brave New World.* We were going to go shopping a lot and have lots of sex. That seemed to be what was on the agenda. And we thought that world conflicts had come to an end, or some people thought that.

I was not among those people. Because if you have a chess game and everything's static and then you move one piece, all of the other pieces are in play. So Cold War, the end of the USSR – some other pieces were going to come into play. And they did. Then we had, of course, the Twin Towers going down, and then it was a whole new ballgame. So, things are always moving and there is no inevitable direction in which they are moving. People who went in for, you know, various kinds of determinism, which essentially derives from the codex book form, in which there is a beginning, a middle and an end – that's how the Bible is arranged, that's how Marxism was arranged. You're going to inevitably have the triumph of the proletariat, and then you're going to have a classless society and the new Jerusalem and all sorts of things. That's not inevitable. No *one direction* is inevitable. So people who say things like, 'Women have made such progress,' I say, 'Just watch it, because that could just as easily go the other way.' And as we have been seeing in some parts of the world, they have gone the other way. But in yet other parts of the world, they're going in a different way, such as in Iran right now. And who would have predicted that? So, usually, you have a kind of smouldering situation underground, in which people are unhappy and discontented, but too scared to say anything. And then you have an ignition point, and then something can blow up. But not necessarily. There isn't any 'necessarily'. There is no – do you know the book *The Wizard of Oz?* It's a children's book. There is no inevitable yellow brick road that leads to the Emerald City of Oz. And when you get to the Emerald City of Oz, the Great Dictator may turn out to be a frightened man behind the curtain.

Yurko Prokhasko: Yes, this book is also very famous and widely read here. So it's not about recognizable structures of our modernity, but you mentioned that

perhaps it's about human nature. And in reading you, I understand that you have no illusions at all about human nature, and no enchantment. As you say, a person is capable of both the highest and the lowest. But what I wanted to ask next is the connection between the human capacity for imagination and evil, that specifically human evil. Is it possible that the imagination is not only capable of recognizing the evil, of imagining the evil, of understanding the evil, but is also one of the sources of evil? Perhaps the reason people are capable of perpetrating evil has to do with the fact that people have an imagination, because the imagination is the ability to combine things that in the natural, animal, organic world are incompatible.

Margaret Atwood: Sure. But similarly, the imagination can lead to imaginations of good. So, you know, it's not a one-way thing. We're very double as creatures. Let us say that the most powerful technology that we ever invented as humans is language, with a grammar. So that allowed us to think in terms of, 'Where was I before I was born?' Something that your dog will never ask. Your dog has a sense of time, your dog knows people. Your dog knows all kinds of things, but your dog will probably never say to itself (well, somebody said, how do you know?): 'Where was I, Rover the dog, before I was born?' And, 'Where did the first dog come from?' 'What was the origin of dogs?' And, 'By the way, when I, Rover the dog, die where will I go then?' 'What will be my post-mortem future?' And, 'While we're at it, the end of time for dogs, when will that be? And what form will it take? Will we have a paradise of dogs? Will we have a great kindly dog who will take care of us?' These are not things that that your dog will ever think. But people think them all the time because they have the technology to do so. They have grammar, they have a past tense, they have a past perfect tense, they have a future tense, they have a future perfect tense, and they also have the conditional: 'What would it have been like if I had acted differently?' Dogs don't do that. As far as we know. I have to keep saying 'as far as we know,' and I know what you're going to say… Well, maybe cats do. Yes. Maybe ravens do, they're very smart.

So that's our technology. That's who we are. And of course, we're always thinking, because we are opportunists, we are thinking things like, 'I'm going to start a war because I can win it.' Nobody ever says, 'I'm going to start a war because I'm going to lose it.' People don't think like that. They do these things because they have posited to themselves a future in which they get their way.

Yurko Prokhasko: Yes, rightly so. We don't truly know about dogs or cats or ravens, asking these questions…

Margaret Atwood: *[laughing]* We have a suspicion, we think maybe…

Yurko Prokhasko: 'How did it all start? What is the future for all of us?' But what do we know for sure is that dogs did not make weapons to exterminate other dogs.

Margaret Atwood: No, but they have fights, they have dog fights. They say to themselves, that dog is my enemy, I am going to bark at it a lot. And then if I get close enough, I'm going to bite it. But they do signal. Dogs send quite specific signals with their ears, particularly with their tails, and with the expressions of their faces. So you see a snarling dog face, stand back get out of the way.

Yurko Prokhasko: Yes, definitely, but that's not what I'm talking about. I am not talking about the ability to commit violence, attack, kill, defend, murder, but I am talking about the ability to use imagination to invent devices for killing. Or, for example, I'm talking about the idea that the electric current, which we have mastered, can be passed through wires, and those wires can be attached to human limbs and run current through and thus torture people.

Margaret Atwood: This has been going on for a very long time. I have a book on ancient weapons of war, which is pretty interesting. And it includes, for instance, scorpion bombs. So what a scorpion bomb was, was you collected a lot of scorpions and you put them in a clay pot. And if somebody was trying to climb the walls of your city on a ladder, you dropped the scorpion bomb on top of them. So we've been inventing weapons for a very long time. And when you see huge military successes, for instance, Genghis Khan was very, very successful as a military leader and conquered a huge number of cities and countries. And they now feel that part of his success was – did the invention of a specific technology, having to do with the bows that they were using, that allowed them to shoot arrows just a bit further than their enemies could shoot? And if you follow military history, it is often a history of somebody inventing something that works

better, and then everybody else wanting to get a hold of it. And in our folktales and legends, this is a recurring motif – the weapon that cannot fail. It's one of the magic things that you always want to have, including the cloak of invisibility – who wouldn't want that? – and the ring of power. You definitely want those things. But of course, our folktales are also cautionary because they include stories about what happens to people who want those things too much, and go overboard. They go too far. I noticed that some of the terminology being used about the Ukraine war comes directly from *Lord of the Rings*.

Yurko Prokhasko: Speaking of language and imagination, what always strikes me so much about your works, when I read them, is the combination of this impressive linguistic mastery of the English language – that left me in such awe that I couldn't speak to you in English today – with an incredible visuality. It's like when you write using the language, you simultaneously see it all in the finest details. One of my favourite songs is one by Mark Knopfler from Dire Straits – he has this lyric, 'all the day clarity of dream'. When I read your works, it seems to me I see that dreamlike clarity. And in our Slavic languages, in Ukrainian, for example, there are as many as three definitions for this ability to look into the future or foretell: there is a foreteller, there is the meaning of prophet, there is the meaning of visionist. And at first glance, these are synonyms, but no, they appeal to different modalities.

A foreteller is someone who gives back, that is, he knows, he knows how it will be, he already knows on the cognitive level. Someone who is a prophet – he makes prophesy, that is, the structure of language you were talking about allows him to build a structure of prediction, he builds a structure of the future based on the language structure. And finally, a visionist is the one who sees, simply sees, he is given the gift of seeing the future. I know that you are neither a prophetess, nor a foreteller, nor a visionist. You are very careful not to call yourself that. But how does it work with you, how does this visual ability work for you, that you seem to see everything in the smallest details?

Margaret Atwood: Well, I think it's called writing *[laughs]*. Well, OK, let us say, I grew up among the scientists, not among the writers. So I grew up among the biologists, and among the biologists, you learn to be very specific. You learn to be quite particular. So you don't say 'a tree', you say what kind of tree. You don't say 'an insect'. It really matters what kind of insect. And if you know the ways of the insect, you can make some predictions about what the insect will do next.

Similarly with, for instance, a frog. This is what frogs are, this is what they do. And therefore, this frog is likely to do the following action. Like that. So, I think part of it is just, it's observation, but not particularly vague observation. And another way of looking at it is that, as a child, I was quite near-sighted. I couldn't see things in the distance, but I could see things close up very clearly. So I used to spend a lot of time watching quite small things, because I could see them. Nobody knew that I had this problem until I was twelve, and people realized that I couldn't actually see the blackboard.

So, yes, part of it is how you're looking. And part of it is, I think that since I grew up in the woods, quite far away from a lot of distractions, you had a limited number of activities, but you knew them quite thoroughly. So not a lot of toys, not a lot of plastic, in fact, we didn't have plastic until about the 1950s. So using what was at hand in a fairly intense way. Not a lot of other distractions. No movies, no radio, no television had really been invented yet. But a lot of books. So I think a lot of reading. I was never told not to read a book. So this reading was quite diverse; it included murder mysteries and books on ants and everything in between, all of that. So a wide range of interests, but very specifically focused. So one of the first questions I'm asking about just about anything is: is it true? You know, is this a fact? Did it happen really? And you have, on the one hand, beliefs – no evidence is needed for them, they are beliefs. You have on the other hand, facts – they can be checked. If it's an experiment, scientific experiment, you need to be able to replicate it, get the same result. And in between you have opinions, and the opinions are based either on beliefs or they're based on facts. And I try to have my opinions based on fact. But we're all in the same position because we keep getting told things that we have no way of checking. We ourselves have no way of checking them. Therefore, it becomes a matter of trust. Do you trust the person who has told you this? And this is why these disinformation campaigns have been so successful.

So I'll just conclude by saying, if you were trying to disrupt another country, what would you do? You would try to make it so that nobody in that country knew who they can trust. Makes people very anxious. It makes them very disconnected, and it makes them reluctant to make decisions because they don't know whether the information that they're getting is trustworthy or not. And in this respect, where we're all somewhat in the same position, who do we trust? You know, do we trust these people? Do we trust those people? Who has been lying? And how do we know? Luckily, there are ways of finding out some of those things.

Yurko Prokhasko: That's very true. I think our official time has run out, but it's so fascinating to speak to you. I actually wonder if it's possible to entice you to transgress for a few more minutes. Can you give us a few minutes of your time?

Margaret Atwood: Of course.

Yurko Prokhasko: Thank you very much. I wanted to ask about this visuality, and this is also tied to the question about your movie adaptations or TV adaptations. Are you pleased with the adaptations of your work? Does the visualization that happens correspond to what you saw with your inner eye, with your mind's eye?

Margaret Atwood: So, I was very lucky with *The Handmaid's Tale.* Remember what I said about luck? It could have gone the other way, you know, you could make a really bad movie of that book. And of course, you could make a really bad movie of just about any book, but that one in particular. And we did have a pilot that, luckily, was not the direction that the project took. It was sensationalistic and quite far from the original vision. For the thing that actually happened, I was lucky in a couple of ways. Number one, nobody knew who had the television rights for years, because the contract had disappeared. So by the time they found it again, series streaming had been invented. There was a film made in 1989, but this is a fairly panoramic book, and it was hard to squash it all into ninety minutes. And this is the problem with large books, books like *War and Peace,* you know, you cannot get it into ninety minutes, but you can get it into a series. The big nineteenth-century novels have gone very well in series. So I was lucky that it was a series; that they could do it in that form.

My second piece of luck was that the showrunner, that is, the person with the overall vision and direction, had fallen in love with this book as a teenaged person. And remember what I said about teenaged reading. He had vowed at the age of nineteen that when he grew up, he was going to make *The Handmaid's Tale.* So he was immersed in it, he knew everything about it that he could know, and he got the job. And then he hired an astonishing team of people, not just the actors, but the directors, the artistic designers… the woman who designed the costumes tried out fifty shades of red before getting the exact one that she wanted. So people were meticulous. They were very devoted to the project and they understood rule number one, which was: you can't just make stuff up. Everything in it has to have a reference in real life, real history, some place,

some time. Someone did this. So everything in the novel that I wrote is based on that. And as they have continued the series, they have stuck to that rule. You can't just invent a space ray to solve all your problems. You can't just invent, you know, the seventh circle of hell. It has to be something that people have really done. And I did it that way because I didn't want people saying that I just had a very gothic, twisted imagination. I wanted to be able to say, 'It's not me who has the gothic twisted imagination, it's human beings.'

Yurko Prokhasko: Well, the thing that impresses me the most in The Handmaid's Tale – and now, actually, the promised part of the conversation about The Handmaid's Tale in more detail. There are two things: one thing is how did you manage to combine all the most important challenges of our time in this text? On the one hand, environmental pollution and the climate crisis, because most women become infertile precisely because of environmental pollution. On the other hand, tyranny and autocracy. Still on the other hand, on the other hand, is a confrontation, yes, between the desire for emancipation and self-management, and tyranny. That means, all the most essential things of modern times are intertwined here.

And the second thing that really stunned me is how you were able to see very accurately and precisely that the possession of the female body, an attempt to establish dominion over it, control over it, over reproduction seems to be the very essence, the very quintessence, the very key to understanding where the desire for tyranny starts. Which, starting from the female body, seeks to spread its power further and further. And the fact that it was obvious even then, that, in the end, it will lead to such obvious, currently obvious phenomena as Trumpism, his supporters … or to what is happening now in Iran. In short, all this leads me to several other questions. What is happening in Iran is important to me because, let's say, not only because women there have risen against this tyranny and are trying to fight for their rights, but because it seems that, for the first time, men in Iran also understand that it is their cause, and they show solidarity with them.

Of course, it speaks in a different way to women's issues in Ukraine. For example, some of the left feminist movements may see a betrayal of femininity in the fact that Ukrainian women are now taking up arms, are fighting and killing other people. Or, let's say, the question of post-war reproduction or reproduction in general, when young men and women of reproductive age are now facing death because of this war, so many people call on them to store their biological material for the future, the possibility to continue family and reproduce in case of

death or mutilation or loss of reproductive function. Or, for example, the question that is about the women of Russia. What does this terrible Russian totalitarianism do to the women living in it, both from the viewpoint of suppression and from the viewpoint of women who begin to believe in it and support it? And where is there female solidarity with the suffering of, for example, Ukrainian women? Or, for example, the need for enhanced reproduction in the post-war period, after such terrible human losses Ukraine has already suffered and will suffer. And so and so on. Would you like to respond to this somehow?

Margaret Atwood: Whoa… So that's about ten questions that you asked there. But let us just make a couple of general statements. Some people, when *The Handmaid's Tale* came out, said, 'How could you show people like Aunt Lydia and Serena Joy, who are women, being against these younger women? And again, I said, 'Read some history.' There will always be takers for the position of 'we need people to help us oppress other people'. There's always going to be volunteers for that. And why? Because if you're threatened with having nothing, having a little something may seem to you better. So having a bit of power, even though you can never have lots of power, may seem to you better than having no power. So I don't think there's any secret there. Imperialistic nations always ruled, conquered, nations by raising an Army or a police from amongst the conquered. That's an old story.

As for controlling women's reproduction, I refer you to the Trojan War. This, again, is an old story. So what happens at the end of the Trojan War? All of the male people are killed or thrown off a cliff, including male children. And the female people and children or girl children are taken off into captivity. Old story, not new. Yes, so the crucial thing is simply this: unless we go the way of Aldous Huxley and start having children in bottles, a society cannot survive without women of reproductive age. Who are, unlike the Shakers, a religious sect in America, who said we're not going to have any sex… the people of reproductive age have to actually want to reproduce. Otherwise, the society vanishes because it cannot replace itself.

So, of course, people are very anxious about this all the time. And to those who get so anxious about it, I would say, 'If you really want people to have families and children, why don't you make it easier for them to do that?' You know, why don't you give them – why don't you make sure that they have places to live? Why don't you make sure that they can support themselves? Why don't you make it possible that the kids aren't going to die of childhood diseases? As they used to do, and in large numbers. So, again, I'm so old that we didn't have vaccines

for diphtheria, we didn't have vaccines for pertussis or measles or mumps or diphtheria – I think I said diphtheria – any of those things. Or polio, that used to kill children and in large numbers. So if you want to be able to have families and children, you have to appreciate that and you have to make it so that having some children doesn't mean that you live a life of poverty and misery, and that your kids die. How about that?

Yurko Prokhasko: I wanted to ask you about the future, about how you imagine the future, but I am being told with great urgency that we are out of time, so that is an optional question. You've already mentioned that the future… nothing is determined.

Margaret Atwood: I'm hopeful. I'm always hopeful because why bother not being hopeful? It's useless, you might as well be hopeful. And I will say that we are a very inventive species, we already have a lot of the technology that we could use to turn the climate crisis around. We have a lot of people working on it, we have a lot of groups working on it, and we have market forces that are tending in that direction. So that gives some reasons for hope. And I also feel that after these excesses, such as wars and moral panics and 'let's burn the witches' and all these kinds of things, that people then settle down and say, 'Maybe that wasn't the right thing to do.' 'Maybe there are more positive, maybe there are more useful things that we could be doing.' So I do have that hope. And I see a lot of signs of – that things are turning in the direction of hopefulness. As an early conservationist and a child of early conservationists, I can say it would have been nice if it had started back in 1972. But it's not too late. It's not too late yet. So, so I'm all for being hopeful because if you're not hopeful, you don't do anything.

Yurko Prokhasko: And therefore I too am hopeful. And I believe that in a very short time you and your [birding] partner will be able to visit an entirely renewed Chernobyl forest, entirely free of radioactive pollution or military or war damage, to see a great and unharmed variety of birds. After which you'll come to Kyiv and talk to us again. I thank you very much for this conversation. Thank you for agreeing to it.

Margaret Atwood: It was my pleasure.

Money and Culture: How Cultural Institutions Became Russia's Offshore

Participants: Vadym Karpiak (Chair), Catherine Belton, Oliver Bullough, Misha Glenny

Vadym Karpiak: Welcome, all the guests who are here with us and who are watching us online. Our next panel discussion is about money and culture. I apologise for the six minutes of delay, because I'm a media person, and I'm very, very accurate when it comes to time. And my friends always taught me, whenever something goes wrong, put it down to technicians. Blame the technicians. So therefore, I blame the technicians.

I will speak Ukrainian. My guests will speak English. I do speak English. But since we are going to talk about money, Russian money, big money, a lot of money, and here I target precision, I prefer to trust our wonderful interpreters who are working in the booth. I trust them more than my English when it comes to a lot of money. So we are going to talk about money and culture. But there is one specific aspect: how cultural institutions became a Russian offshore. Let me introduce my three guests, who are basically my fellow colleagues:

Catherine Belton, who's been a correspondent of *Financial Times* in Moscow. Catherine, welcome. She's a renowned journalist, a reputable journalist. You also know her probably for the book *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia.* Unfortunately, this book hasn't been translated into Ukrainian yet.

Oliver Bullough, another guest of mine. A British journalist and writer, the author of the book *Moneyland.* It has been translated into Ukrainian and is called *Hroshokray.* Oliver, welcome. We met in person, I remember. I interviewed you about this book.

And we also have Misha Glenny in the studio, another journalist, British journalist, historian, and also investigative journalist. And you've probably heard about his book, *McMafia.* It hasn't been translated yet into Ukrainian, but I have an idea of how it might be named once it's translated.

So we have journalists who are investigating and who are trying to uncover this offshore political criminal mafia. My first question – before we get down

to Russian money in culture, in the world – will be the following: how come we got together, three Brits and myself? Britain doesn't stop pleasing me; basically, Britain became home to my wife and my two children because we lived in Bucha and we were forced to flee and now they temporarily live near Oxford. How come that there are three British journalists in this panel discussion? And these are British journalists who are investigating Russian influence. Why don't other journalists investigate this? Why do the British journalists really care and want to find the truth? That's the first question that I'd like to address to everybody. Maybe we will start with Catherine Belton. Catherine, why are British journalists and why are you, personally, so interested in that? And why is it so important for you?

Catherine Belton: I think for British journalists it's very important because London has been a hub for so long, for so much Russian cash. Really since the early 2000s, the UK government opened its arms wide to as much cash coming out of Russia as possible. Everyone thought that the more Russian cash in London, the better. Everyone thought that if there were Russian companies listing their shares in London, the more they'd have to adhere to Western corporate governance rules and transparency rules. But actually, that proved not to be the case because most of the Russian cash coming to London was taking advantage of the fact that really there weren't very many rules at all. And slowly many oligarchs, many state-linked businessmen, were investing more and more, not just in our markets, but also in London cultural institutions. They've plunged millions and millions of pounds into museums and other cultural institutions, like universities, and also have been acquiring football clubs. And really have gained a very significant sway over cultural life in London and over the establishment. And this became increasingly important to understand, particularly after such political events as the Brexit referendum and so on. But I won't get ahead of myself and I'll let the others answer this question too.

Vadym Karpiak: Why do so many Russians invest in Britain? They also invest their cash in Paris and Rome or Washington. But why is Britain something that is like a magnet for them?

Catherine Belton: You know, I think Britain in many ways is seen as the key to the establishment. I think Russians, first of all, for its cultural history, its traditions,

made a beeline for London because of this. You know, I think everyone wants to be accepted when you're an emerging market. Many oligarchs I've spoken to, the Yeltsin-era ones, they all wanted to be accepted by the establishment. And they wanted these friendships with Lords and Ladies. And then eventually they wanted to buy the Lords and Ladies and have them on the boards of their companies. I think it's an evolutionary process, and certainly when Vladimir Putin took over as president of Russia, the oligarchs were then automatically almost less independent than after Mikhail Khodorkovsky was jailed. The Russian oligarchs were actually no longer oligarchs, but vassals of Putin's Kremlin because they had to follow Kremlin orders. Otherwise, they might lose their wealth and face the same jail sentences and takeovers of their companies as Khodorkovsky did.

So you had this curious mixture of oligarchs who were once independent with this great presence here in London, and yet they may not have always been following an independent agenda, because in order to hold on to their wealth, as one of them told me himself: 'If I get a call from the Kremlin saying "spend $1 billion or $2 billion on this or that strategic project," I can't refuse, I have to comply.'

So here we were in London, sitting here accepting huge amounts of cash from businessmen who weren't really independent businessmen and may have been in fact serving a Kremlin agenda and acquiring soft power and influence, not just over museums, but over our political life, over our Lords and Ladies. And we had all these people in the House of Lords stand up and defend Russia, for instance, when it annexed Crimea in 2014, and they really gained deep inroads into our political life.

Vadym Karpiak: I understand that part of this admiration of Britain, of Brits, is probably the remains of the empire spirit in Russia. They are fond of monarchy, aristocracy and unique genuine aristocracy. Not Moscow's aristocracy, not the new money aristocracy, but the genuine aristocracy, which has long tradition. Oliver, my next question is for you: why are British journalists so interested and so careful when it comes to Russian money, and are their investigations so fruitful and give a lot of material to discuss worldwide?

Oliver Bullough: Yeah, thanks for the question. It's an interesting question. I think that the answer is quite a simple one. British journalists write about rich Russians and the infiltration of kleptocratic money into the financial system

for the same reason that Italian journalists write about the mafia, or Canadian journalists write about ice hockey. You know, you write about what's in front of you. And Britain has a problem with kleptocratic infiltration of our financial system, which is streets ahead of any other country. And therefore, that's what we end up writing about. I think it's a hugely problematic area for the whole world. But Britain is very much at the centre of it. I mean, obviously, as you said, oligarchs like to buy property not just in the UK, they'll buy property in the south of France or in Miami or in various other world cities, but the services that the UK offers to a kleptocrat or an oligarch are just so much broader than what any other country offers. We have wealth management, we have tax havens, we have low taxes, we have law enforcement agencies that look the other way. We have private schools. We have great real estate. We've got a language everyone speaks. Britain is just a very convenient place to be extremely rich, particularly if your wealth is of dubious origin.

And as Catherine was saying, there is this strange attraction of the British tradition. I think that, you know, if you've arrived very suddenly, you've come from nowhere and become extremely rich very quickly, you want to be able to live like the aristocrats that you can see in films and TV shows like *Bridgerton.* And it might seem that it would take hundreds of years to be accepted in that way. But the sort of secret in Britain is that actually that's available within just a few years. If you look at someone, talking of a Ukrainian, like Dmitri Firtash – he arrived in Britain totally unknown. No one had any idea who he was in 2007. And by 2012, he was meeting the Queen's husband. That's a really rapid acceptance into the establishment. And all he had going for him was a lot of money. But that's all you need. So if you have a lot of money, Britain is very willing to accept you. And that is something that I find interesting. I find it appalling, to be honest. And, so, I like writing about it. And I think there is a small but mighty group of us, fellow journalists who like to write about this, too.

Vadym Karpiak: What you said, Oliver. I remember that the same thesis is also in your book *Moneyland.* So you said in your book that this corruption that Western countries criticize Ukraine for, it wouldn't have been possible without support of Western countries and without legal support, economic support, which legal companies based in London provide. So they are sitting in London, working in London and wearing white gloves. Misha, I have a question for you. I have my own answer why it's so important for the Brits to investigate dirty money. But my answer is more literary, given the fact that we are in the BookForum literature festival. I'll explain it. I put it down to the British tradition of

the detectives: Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, et cetera. So there is a tradition of personal search for truth and trying to find the truth, dig into the truth. And it's a very deep-down tradition, and it's important that it's done by one person. And the role of those detectives is now done by the journalists very often. But why Brits? Why do they want to be detectives all the time?

Misha Glenny: I'm going to follow on pretty much what Catherine and Oliver have said about the fact that London became the locus for Russian money. But I think we can explore a little further why that was the case. Because, before the collapse of Communism, about three or four years before the collapse of Communism and the end of the Soviet Union, we had Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher leading a revolution within capitalism, and we saw the emergence and dominance of neoliberalism and financial capitalism, which did not, in the 1990s, infect all countries in Europe. But what happened in the United States and the United Kingdom is that London and New York started competing to be the centre of the financial economy in the world, the global financial centre. And what this meant was that they started deregulating a great deal. And that led to what Oliver was talking about, the ease with which people could invest in the United Kingdom without being properly scrutinized. So we had no idea where that money was coming from, whether it was the result of criminal activities, whether it was a result of corruption. We just welcomed it all in.

If, for example, you wanted to buy a property in Copenhagen, in Denmark, you had to be physically – and this is the case to the day – you have to be physically resident there for five years before you're allowed to buy a property. Whereas in London you can be sitting in Moscow or Vladivostok or wherever it is, and you can buy a property over the Internet and start investing in that way. And no one is going to ask any questions about where the money comes from, because we allow people to buy property in the United Kingdom without revealing their identity.

So in this rush of the 1990s of neoliberalism and financial capitalism, London became the favoured place, again, for the reason that Oliver and Catherine pointed out. It's halfway between New York and Moscow. It's only four hours' flight. It offers private schools for the kids. They speak English, which of course is rapidly becoming the global lingua franca, so that makes life easier. And essentially, as the other two said, nobody asks any questions. And that is the fundamental reason why British journalists are interested in this, because we were one of the two main drivers of neoliberalism in the world. And although,

as Oliver pointed out, there were places in the US – California, Miami, New York – and then there were pockets in Europe, like Marbella, in Spain, which was favoured by Russian organized crime, or the south coast of France, the Riviera. But fundamentally, most of the money, the greatest concentration of money was going through London.

And it had a huge social impact on our lives in the United Kingdom because it meant the house prices rocketed up and people were no longer able to afford housing. We saw a lot of people leave the housing market and become renters and this sort of thing. So it had a massive social impact. So, when you're talking about it and writing about it, there is a lot of local interest as to why successive United Kingdom governments – and remember, this started really under John Major, then Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and the Conservatives have taken it to a new level, as I'm sure Catherine and Oliver will describe a little later on. So that, for me, is the primary reason: is London as one of the great centres of aggressive financial capitalism.

Vadym Karpiak: Thank you, Misha. In that case, we will ask Catherine to tell us a bit more about what she already started, what she touched on. I will turn first to the book world, I will turn to Catherine's book, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West.* And by the way, I address the Ukrainian publishers: it's a fantastic book, it needs to be translated into Ukrainian. But you had trouble because of this book. Last year, a few Russian oligarchs, including Friedmann, Abramovich, Rosneft and a number of others, less public, big business people, sued the publishers who published the book. And then there was a settlement stipulating that some sections of the book will be removed in further publications. Not the entire book, thankfully, but they managed, through court, to reach this sort of compromise or this effect that they wanted. Obviously, this points to the fact that Russian oligarchs understand the power of the printed word, the power of the book. And of course, we are ourselves now at a book festival. Let me ask, because of Russia's full-scale invasion, has your stance changed in relation to the attack on your book? And is there any opportunity to preserve it and to keep publishing the book as it originally came out? I would like to understand this for myself because I've been watching this unfold.

Catherine Belton: Yes, as you mentioned about a year after publication of the book, we received a slew of lawsuits. First, it was Roman Abramovich, the owner of Chelsea Football Club. He'd taken particular umbrage over the fact

that we dared to quote three former associates as saying that he'd acquired Chelsea Football Club, on Putin's orders, to acquire soft power and influence in the UK. Precisely this issue that we're talking about, about how Russian cash has invaded UK cultural institutions. He really hated this idea, and yet he took us to court over it and then a whole bunch of other oligarchs, as you mentioned, Friedman and then Rosneft, the Kremlin old champion, followed suit. And he was demanding that we remove twenty-six passages from the book. And some of these passages didn't even mention him. For instance, he was very upset about a quote from Joe Biden, when Joe Biden was Vice President in 2015, when he was the first to point out how the Kremlin was using oligarchs as tools of strategic corruption. And it didn't even mention Abramovich's name. And yet he was saying, 'I don't like that, remove it from the book.' And because the UK court system is essentially stacked in favour of anyone who has lots of money, because it costs so much and the proceedings are so lengthy, even if you have a good case and HarperCollins, my publisher, was amazing, despite the fact that we had this enormous barrage of lawsuits against us. HarperCollins stood firm, hired a team of lawyers, and they were defending the book. We got to the stage of preliminary hearings. And in the preliminary hearing, in fact, the judge found that one of Abramovich's claims was completely overexaggerated. He had said that my book says that he has a corrupt relationship with Vladimir Putin. Now, I'm sure this is something I could have tried to write about, but I didn't. And the judge found that what the book was describing was actually how he is under Vladimir Putin's control.

And obviously, since the war started, since the invasion of Ukraine, we've seen Abramovich now openly take on the role as emissary for Putin. We've heard how David Arakhamia, the head of the Ukrainian delegation for negotiations, has previously said openly to the *Wall Street Journal* [that] he says to Abramovich, 'Please tell your boss' – meaning Putin. So this is now an official relationship. And also, at the time when we were defending the book, this is something that Roman Abramovich's lawyers understood that it would be much more difficult to dispute, because of all the reporting that was in the book, because of everything that we know about how the Kremlin operates, how it controls its billionaire businessmen. So his lawyers actually withdrew their demand that we remove all these passages he didn't like from the book. And instead of that … So we didn't get rid of any text from the book, but because we didn't want to face another year or two of legal proceedings, which could have cost £2.5 million to defend it in the UK alone, and another £2.5 million in Australia, because he had sued us there as well – he wanted to make sure that HarperCollins was intimidated enough to not want to fight it – but because the court had essentially

already ruled in our favour, we got this much better offer from the lawyers in which, instead of removing text, we softened it slightly. So for instance, in this claim about Chelsea Football Club, instead of saying outright that the three former associates said Putin bought Chelsea – I mean, that Abramovich bought Chelsea Football Club on Putin's orders, it now says the three former associates said Putin may have asked Abramovich to buy the club. And then there's an addition to a denial that was already there. So really to go through one year of legal proceedings, which actually also cost HarperCollins £1.5 million to fight, it was a tiny change that was of no consequence whatsoever to the narrative of the book.

And in fact, the whole story has a silver lining because it was so extreme. You had these oligarchs coming in with crazy, exaggerated claims that the judge often ruled were exaggerated. For instance, the Rosneft case was completely thrown out of court because the judge said it was unfounded, not defamatory of the company, and so on. So, in the end, you know, there was this huge pile on, which most of it was baseless, didn't have any substance. And as a result, it attracted a lot of media attention. Because of the media attention, the UK government has really recognized that there is a problem with UK libel law; that journalists don't have the means to defend themselves when deep-pocketed oligarchs come in and send threatening letters, even if you have a good case, as we did, even if your journalism is sound, that it's public-interest journalism. Most journalists up until recently would just, at the first sight of a threatening letter, agree to remove or kind of retract the sentences that they could have defended – just because it's too expensive. And so now the UK government has been working on reforms to the libel law in which cases like these, which are now called SLAPs, it's called strategic litigation against public participation. And these are basically attempts to censor journalists over public-interest journalism. And now the UK government is introducing measures, well we hope they're still going to go ahead with this in, which would make it much easier to throw out cases like this at an earlier stage. Before it gets far too expensive to defend. So in a way, thank you, Abramovich, for really going too far.

Vadym Karpiak: Wow. This this was a great advertisement for the book, I'm sure. And this extract about Chelsea, about how Abramovich bought Chelsea at the orders of Putin, drew attention to Chelsea, obviously. But that's clear because it's, you know, big sport. And we expect where there's big sports, there will be big money. When we're talking about cultural institutions, about culture, people mostly like to pretend that culture is outside of politics, which of course, it isn't.

But Catherine, you've already mentioned that apart from Chelsea, the Russians have invested millions into cultural institutions and cultural events. Can you go into a bit more detail? What specifically have they invested into, what spheres of culture are they interested in? What are they keen on?

Catherine Belton: Yes. I mean, Chelsea Football Club, in a way, is a big part of UK culture. I mean, it's the country's national sport. It's the most loved sport. And I really, kind of, experienced directly myself the power and sway in the UK establishment that this purchase had given Roman Abramovich, just because, in some of the reporting on the lawsuits, Chelsea Football Club would leak stories to the UK media, very often to the sports reporter who wants to be on the good side of Chelsea Football Club. And they would write anything that Abramovich wanted them to. So they were trying to trash my book, denigrate the book's credibility. And because they wanted to be in the good books of Chelsea Football Club, and get scoops on who the new players were, they would write anything that they wanted. And any journalist who is trying to write about the case as it was and what was happening and what the rulings really said would also get threats from Chelsea Football Club.

And so not only had Abramovich won himself quite a good reputation among many of the UK's leading reporters, just because he was the owner of a very popular football club, but he'd also hired Lords to the boards of his company. He has hired the former treasurer to Prince Charles, now King Charles, and he has also, through one of his companies, given loans to the son of King Charles's treasurer. And somehow this has also given him great sway in the UK establishment. So you have Abramovich here, who has enjoyed great stature until the war. And you have many other figures, so Oliver, of course, mentioned Dmitry Firtash, although he's Ukrainian, we know that he has very close ties to the Kremlin. Otherwise he wouldn't have become the Kremlin's gas trader of choice in the RosUkrEnergo, in these gas deals that we've seen being used to taint and corrupt any pro-Western Ukrainian leadership in the past following the Orange Revolution. So he has made huge donations to Cambridge University. He's also hired various English Lords to sit on the board of his British Ukrainian Society. And as Oliver pointed out, in 2007, he was a nobody. But in five years' time he was meeting Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth's husband, and sort of enjoying all this stature in the UK.

And probably the most, kind of, ubiquitous oligarch – Russian oligarch – who is literally everywhere; he's given so many donations to UK cultural institutions.

I had to make a list of them before we started today. His name is Len Blavatnik. And really any UK journalist or journalists anywhere who writes that he's made his money in Russia, ends up getting a nasty phone call from PR people and then from lawyers. But this is the business partner of Mikhail Fridman, of Viktor Vekselberg. He made all his money out of the privatization of Russian assets in the 1990s. He already had a US citizenship in the 1980s. He married an American wife in '84, and he's been the most able to try and escape the Russian origins of his cash. He's made $14 billion upwards out of Russian privatizations, mostly through the sale of his oil company to Rosneft.

And in the UK, he has his school of government. In Oxford, he gave £75 million to the Oxford School of Government. He's given £50 million to the Tate Modern. He's given money to the Royal Opera House, to the National Portrait Gallery, to the Courtauld Institute, to the British Museum. His name is emblazoned in the UK everywhere. He funded a new wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum. You know, he's been very skilled at making deep inroads into our society, and that has also won him favours because obviously these activities helped bring in BP. But he's a very dark horse that we need to investigate more closely.

Vadym Karpiak: Thank you, Catherine. When we talk about Russians or Russia, we are talking about a lot of money. Misha, in your book *McMafia,* you said that 15 per cent of the world GDP is criminal money. Russian government is the government that has merged with criminals. There are a lot of Russian journalists who investigated the ties of Putin and Solntsevskaya criminal gangs in St Petersburg's organized groups, Moscow's organized groups, crime groups, and we understand that they have made their wealth on natural resources, gas, oil. But in the early 1990s you investigated this. Where does the Russian wealth come from after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

Misha Glenny: So what happens, what's important, is that along with the collapse of Communism, you have a very rapid, unregulated transformation from a planned economy to a free market economy. And in that moment of transition, you have this opportunity, as private individuals, to try and seize the ownership of previously state assets, which in the mid- to long-term will be incredibly lucrative. This didn't only happen in Russia, it happened in Ukraine, it happened in Poland, Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia in a spectacular form, which I may mention a little bit later. Because what happens when you go to the free market economy and you don't have the

institutions to regulate that economy, you don't have a court system that is able to mediate between business people, their disputes. You need some form of regulator.

And we first saw this emerge, surprisingly, in the 1850s, in Sicily, in Italy, where the mafia first emerged. And their role was to regulate the market. And exactly the same thing happened in Russia. So you had two businessmen and they each had their own mafia. And if there was a business dispute about how much to pay for this consignment of goods, they would try and negotiate it. And if it failed, they got their respective mafias to negotiate it. Now, in most cases… and they paid the mafia roughly 30 per cent of the income of any deal. In most cases it was fine and the mafias worked it out. But sometimes when they disagreed there would be a shootout and sometimes those shootouts were actually pre-organized in advance. And this was the period of so-called gangster capitalism. Gangster capitalism – whether in Ukraine or in or in Russia or elsewhere –was accompanied by a very dramatic collapse in most ordinary people's living standards. So, for example, in Russia, you saw male life expectancy collapse from the age of sixty-nine to fifty-eight in the space of ten years. So people were in real distress. This is, incidentally – why the oligarchs started exporting money to places like London, is because they had a fairly good grasp of Russian history, and they anticipated that at some point a strongman figure would come along and start trying to regulate all of this massive gangster capitalism. And the trigger for that was the ruble collapse of 1998. And within two years, Vladimir Putin was in power.

Now, what Putin did is that he imposed a deal on oligarchs and organized crime. He said, 'Up until now, you have been controlling the state.' And that was famous, how seven oligarchs in particular managed the re-election of Boris Yeltsin in 1996. He said: 'From now on, that's not going to be the case. The state is going to manage you, and you have a choice of keeping your money. And if you do not keep your money, we will take it from you. And if you go into exile and start political activity against me, I will come after you. Organized crime, similarly, will be operating on behalf of the state.'

One of the investigations that I did a little later on was about how the relationship between organized cyber-criminality and the FSB and the GRU emerged in 2000, whereby Putin, to this day, allows major cyber-criminal gangs to work, obviously, against Ukraine. But also we have had a massive surge in cyber-attacks in Europe and to a lesser extent, the United States, since 24 February. All the criminal groups, whether it's Conti, whether it's Darkside, whether it's Maze. They are all operating under license from Vladimir Putin. And his aim is

twofold. First of all, the criminal cyber-gangs make huge sums of money. We're talking about hundreds of millions in ransomware a year. And secondly, they undermine the national infrastructure of countries like Ukraine, but also other European countries and the United States. So there is now a very, very deep connection between criminality, oligarchs and Putin. I would say that the oligarchs probably have been extremely distressed by the invasion of Ukraine. They don't say anything about it, of course, they keep their mouth relatively shut, although Deripaska did articulate his dismay at all this. Because of the fact that, you know, they can't live the high life in London. They can't use their money. A lot of their money has been frozen. But, of course, because Putin has now gone full Stalin, they're too frightened to speak up and say anything about it.

Vadym Karpiak: I love what you said very laconically: before, let's say, 1998 or 2000, seven oligarchs controlled the government and then Putin came to power and he said, now the Government is going to control you. But in practice, we see that it's not the government that controls them. So Putin became an oligarch, he became a tycoon.

Misha Glenny: And the state, of course, is Putin. Putin is the state.

Vadym Karpiak: We say Russia, we mean Putin, probably. In the Soviet Union, there was a popular phrase: 'When we say Lenin, we mean Party, Communist Party, when we say Communist Party, we mean Lenin.' And I believe the same can be said about Putin and Russia. We mean Putin, we talk about Russia. Catherine told us how Russians invest money, their money. Misha told us where this money emerged, where it came from. How Russians, started accumulating this wealth and how they are redistributing it now. Now, I'd like to ask you, Oliver, as an expert in offshore, how they transferred this money from Russia to London. I remember a scandal with offshore companies. Roldugin, the name, emerged at a certain time. When we talk about that person, some people only hear Dugin, so this is the ideologist, fascist ideologist. But this is said Roldugin. He was a famous musician, violinist, conductor, a friend of Putin, cellist, who was disclosed when he was trying to launder hundreds of millions of dollars through offshore accounts. Oliver, according to your information, how do cultural institutions, how are cultural institutions interesting to Russians in terms of money laundering? My question is the following: culture for the Russians, is this the

Top (from left to right): Vadym Karpiak and Misha Glenny
Bottom: Oliver Bullough, Catherine Belton and Vadym Karpiak

means for money laundering, or this is rather soft power that they are using as a disguise?

Oliver Bullough: Well, the money laundering obviously has to happen before they can give money to a cultural institution. So, I mean, as you mentioned, the case of Sergei Roldugin, and I don't think anyone thinks that those hundreds of millions of dollars were all his money. He was just essentially a human shell company, as it were, sitting there, pretending to own assets that actually probably belonged to his friends. And one of his oldest friends, of course, is Vladimir Putin. But once the money has been laundered – obviously, much of it via banks in the Baltic states: Danske Bank, Swedbank and so on – and has ended up in London, where they want the money to remain, they need to make sure that their money is safe. And obviously they can find clever ways of owning property via multiple shell companies in the Caribbean. But if they want political protection, you know, they need to look at how Britain works and work out how to get political protection in Britain. And in this regard, investing in cultural assets is an incredibly useful and, by their standards, quite a cheap way of getting protection.

Now, as Catherine was saying, our laws around defamation are extremely favourable towards wealthy people and very unfavourable towards journalists. And what you need to do to use the defamation laws is show that you have a reputation in the UK to protect. And one way to build up a reputation is to not be an oligarch any more, but to be a philanthropist. And if you give money to art galleries or universities or cultural institutions, you set up a foundation, then you can establish a reputation or you can claim to have a reputation as a philanthropist. And that makes it much harder for journalists to write about you. So that's one useful part of spending money on cultural institutions.

The second part, and I think it's probably no less useful, is if you run or if you've given money to an art gallery, or you have a foundation, then you can have parties and parties are things that influential people want to come to. So it helps you to meet all the members of the establishment, which you want to join. And so that is a second obviously useful part.

And then the third part is, as you mentioned, soft power. This is where the oligarchs are not really acting in personal capacity, but acting as emissaries of Russia, as parts of, sort of, the greater Kremlin. And they're thinking not only of defending themselves, but they're also trying to spread their own influence, to spread the influence of Putin, of the Kremlin, and the ideas of the Kremlin. And I

don't think we can understate how important this cultural infiltration has been in that regard. If you have a large number of people, members of the establishment, who are sympathetic towards the Kremlin elite because they have drunk their wine, eaten their food, sat around a table with them, you know, that really does go quite a long way. And it is noticeable, as Catherine said, after the annexation of Crimea and the first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, how many members of the elite in Britain – and in other Western countries, but particularly in Britain – were falling over themselves to explain that Crimea was historically Russian, that this was just a, you know, an exception. That it didn't really have anything to do with any greater scheme to undermine Ukraine, all of which we now can see is complete nonsense. And they were clearly wrong. But that's the kind of argument that they clearly had heard around dinner tables and were just, you know, spreading when speaking on the television. And as I was saying, my last point, it's really quite cheap for an oligarch whose wealth is in the billions, just giving £20 million here, £20 million there to add to an art gallery or another cultural institution or a museum or a university. How much did Firtash give to Cambridge? Well it was only £5 or £6 million, and yet it really has an outsize influence on helping them to cement their place in the British establishment. And that has a knock-on effect into British politics and British cultural discussion, which is really valuable.

So, I mean, you can see why they've done it. It's been very, very successful. And I imagine after this current crisis has passed, that they'll come back to try and do it again, because it's such an obvious way to gain influence in London and in wider British society.

Vadym Karpiak: We all are watching the new sanctions. You know, it's now in its eighth package of sanctions by the EU. OK, the UK isn't part of the EU, but the UK is involved in some of the sanction pressure on Russia, sometimes even harder than the EU. But we see that these sanctions are against open businesses, I don't know, against jewellery, metals, coal, steel. But we do not see sanctions against offshore companies. And with this angle in mind, Oliver, do you perceive a readiness in the British Government to start fighting the offshores? Not only because they are the channel for Russian dirty money, but also because just the idea of offshore appears harmful to the economy and to honest competition.

Oliver Bullough: I don't see that willingness, really. There have been, as you said, a lot of sanctions in the UK, as in the EU and the US, against individual oligarchs, against their companies, their assets and so on. But in the UK, that has not gone together with any kind of concerted law enforcement effort to investigate the ownership of their wealth; to seek to not just to freeze their assets, but to seize them, to confiscate them, and maybe to return them to help rebuild Ukraine. None of that has happened at all. The only asset that has been confiscated in a British territory so far has been a super yacht in Gibraltar, and that was not seized to benefit Ukraine, but it was seized to benefit JP Morgan, the investment bank. So, rhetorically, there's been a lot of support in the UK for fighting the Russian oligarchs, for undermining their influence. But in terms of real law enforcement effort, which is what's required, you know – if we want to confiscate assets, that requires court proceedings and investigations. None of that has happened really at all. So I'm not particularly hopeful at the moment that there is any change of heart in the British government. As you may have noticed, we have a new government here, which is even worse than the last one. And I don't think while this government persists that we'll see any meaningful change to clear up our offshore empire, which of course isn't just in the United Kingdom itself, it also extends into our islands in the Caribbean and in the Channel Islands and elsewhere.

Vadym Karpiak: In that case, I have a question, ladies and gentlemen, to all three of you, which is a question that has been widely discussed in Ukraine. Can culture be outside of politics? Much as we would love…Culture does better with money than without money. And this is exactly what we are discussing of this panel. In Ukraine, for a long time, there were a lot of people who would defend the opinion that culture is one thing and politics is another thing. And so we should not ban the arrival of Russian artists or Russian singers if they do not directly support Putin to the extent that they will take up a gun and fire at Ukrainian soldiers, as some Russian actors have done. Specifically, I'm thinking of, let's say, Mikhail Porechenkov who boasted of this on camera. But we do have instances in the world, specifically in Britain, where a well-known ballet dancer, Sergei Polunin, who, by the way, was born in Ukraine, in Kherson, which is now temporarily occupied, a superstar on the London ballet scene. He was called the *enfant terrible,* because he constantly presented problems. It was difficult for the London Ballet because of the regular reports of his binges, drugs, parties. Of course, this made him exciting to the London public to an extent. Like, look at this, look at this unpredictable Russian. He, of course, exploited this image until he was finally kicked out and he moved to Moscow and then he danced there. Or there is the opera diva Anna Netrebko – OK, she is more known in Vienna – the opera singer who is publicly fully behind the Russian political stance and justification for the annexation of Ukrainian territories. And I'm just talking off the top of my head, by the way. There are tons. There are many more. I'm not talking about the athletes, the sportspeople. And all of these people are wined and dined in respectable company. They're still warmly embraced, under the cover of this thesis of the mysterious Russian soul that the Russians are so eager to exploit. And, you know, as Oksana Zabuzhko, a well-known Ukrainian novelist and journalist, says in one of her essays, she gives this great example of how the Russian poets, Russian writers, having found themselves in various fellowships, that they might sometimes show up drunk or do silly things. And this would be seen as something extremely touching and cute almost, this mysterious look. Look at this cultural peculiarity. Whereas if something like this had been done by a Ukrainian or Czech or Polish stipend recipient, this would be seen as outrageous. 'What the hell is he thinking?' And so now my question is: is there a general consensus – obviously, we'll be talking about Britain because you all represent United Kingdom. Is there a consensus that the Russian culture that Russia has been promoting, and when they've been financing the British culture as well, is part and parcel of Russian politics and Russian imperialism? By the way, there's a pretty decent article about this in the latest Economist, I think, about how Russian literature really does have this imperialist DNA. But, you know, so be it. So my question, sorry. Finally, to formulate my question: do you believe that there is a sense of Russian culture as part and parcel of this imperialist Russian political and financial expansionism, this attack on the world? Or is it that Britain would rather separate these things? Misha, I will start with you just because you are obviously nearest.

Misha Glenny: That's quite a question. Is Russian literature and culture inherently imperialist? I don't think it's inherently imperialist. Some of it may be, but a lot of it isn't. And, in terms of individuals and sanctions, it depends what they're…You know, these are people of influence, so it is important what they say, and it is important how we react. And if they're people of influence and they publicly support the Russian invasion of Ukraine, then I can see that it's perfectly justified to sanction them. That's clear. If they stand up and they distance themselves from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, I don't think they should be sanctioned. At the beginning of the invasion, we got into situations where in the United Kingdom people were talking about banning Tchaikovsky from a concert

programme. One of them was the *1812* Overture, and so I think there was some justification for not playing that because it was so sensitive at the time. The idea that you ban Tchaikovsky, as some people have suggested, sort of, globally and entirely, is absolutely ludicrous as far as I'm concerned. And I hope we don't go down that road. We've had a big discussion here yesterday about how one engages with Russia after the war is over. It's, of course, very difficult to speculate on this because we don't know what the outcome of the war is going to be and how we get to that outcome. And there are still many, very frightening dangers ahead of us in this war. But engage with Russia one must. And so it's important to understand these cultural issues. I don't believe that Russian performers get a free pass because of perception of the Russian spirit, as it were, against other people. And celebrities and artists have been behaving badly as a matter of course for many centuries. And I don't think it's a particularly Russian problem. You had rock bands like The Who smashing up their hotel rooms and things like that. And it's what they get up to.

Vadym Karpiak: Thank you, Misha. Catherine, do you think there's a separation between the understanding of Russian culture as part of Russian political influence or not?

Catherine Belton: I think what we've seen in the past is that Russian culture has been used as a way to make inroads into the UK political establishment, for instance. Like Dimitri Firtash, of course, was using it as a tool when he was making his donations to Cambridge University and elsewhere. And then once he'd established himself, as Oliver mentioned, he then would send his minions to funnel millions of pounds in donations into the UK Conservative Party. So it can be used in this way. It can be subversive if, like you have people like Anna Netrebko standing up and supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in some ways this can filter into our discourse. So I think it is important to distinguish, as Misha said, from those who are openly supporting the invasion and openly supporting the Russian Government as opposed to those who are speaking out. And I think we should applaud and recognize those who have made a stand, like Alla Pugacheva, for instance, who made these very brave statements about her husband and against the war. And I think there has to be this very clear distinction in how we treat Russian cultural figures. And if they are being brave, then that has to be recognized.

Vadym Karpiak: Thank you. Oliver.

Oliver Bullough: Yes, I mean, you asked at the beginning if politics can be separated from culture or if culture can be separated from politics. I think it can. I think the most important thing is that culture should be separated from oligarchs. You know, they corrupt everything they touch. And the news yesterday about the bridge in Crimea reminded me of that legendary film, *The Crimean Bridge. Made With Love!,* written by Margarita Simonyan, which has, I think, a record breaking 1.1 stars on IMDB. I don't know if any films have fewer stars than that, but it is a genuinely appalling production. And I think that when politics interferes so deeply with culture as it is when Margarita Simonyan writes a film about the building of a bridge to Crimea, then you end up with the very dregs of the barrel. But, meanwhile, at the same time there are, as Catherine mentioned, Alla Pugacheva, and lots of people in broader Russian culture, obviously, involved in Memorial, the human rights group, and so on, who continue to be incredibly brave and continue to be trying to fight to build a better Russia and a Russia that would live with its neighbours in peace.

And so I suppose for us, I think the challenge is to try and encourage the people who represent that better Russia, while ostracizing and boycotting and sanctioning people like Margarita Simonyan, who have money from the Kremlin to make films that really should never have been made in the first place, to celebrate a bridge that should never have been built in the first place. So, you know, that's the challenge, to try and prevent oligarchs from hijacking culture. And, I think the answer to that challenge is to continue to expose the origins of the oligarchs' money. Because if we really talk about where it came from, they wouldn't be able to give these fashionable parties, attended by members of the elite, because the elite wouldn't want to attend their parties in the same way that they wouldn't attend parties given by the head of a drug cartel. So it's a challenge for us journalists just to keep exposing. And hopefully by continuing to do so, we will manage to prevent culture being accessible as a sort of reputation-washing tool for the oligarchs in the future.

Misha Glenny: Vadym, can I just come in with a quick addendum to what Oliver was saying? What happened in the United Kingdom – and he mentioned about philanthropy, which is very important. What happened in the United Kingdom was that one of Margaret Thatcher's central planks was that you should reduce subsidies for the arts, and instead encourage private companies and philan-

thropists to take over on the financing of the arts. And this, in the United Kingdom, is the root of the problem. We have seen state funding for the arts more or less collapse, and so all artistic institutions are now dependent on the goodwill of very rich people. And it's axiomatic that very rich people, unless they happen to be altruists, and there aren't that many of them among the philanthropic community – it's axiomatic that very rich people want some form of return for their investment in an artistic institution, including influencing the type of things that an institution will mount, put on and so on and so forth. And so we have an intrinsic problem, and it's acute in the United Kingdom. Because in the European Union, in most European Union countries, you will see much higher levels of state funding for the arts and culture, which tends to be more disinterested in what the outcomes of that cultural work is.

But of course, on the broader question about culture and politics: culture and politics have always interacted with each other because culture is often a way of discussing and considering what is going on in the wider society, including politics as well. And so the idea that you can just separate culture and politics is actually fanciful in the first place, I would say. The question is, how do you structure that relationship institutionally between culture and politics? And in my opinion, in the United Kingdom, we've got it wrong since the 1980s.

Vadym Karpiak: I have a comment to what Oliver said. I also love the idea of separating oligarchs and culture. But when I talked about that with my university professor, he said, 'Try to separate the Borgia oligarchs and the Italian Renaissance and see what happens.' I believe that this is a broad circle of issues that we need to discuss. So, we have a question [from the audience].

Audience member: I'd like to pose the question on behalf of BEforUKRAINE. We're an international and Ukrainian civil society coalition with a common purpose to block access to financial resources enabling Russian aggression. And therefore, I'd like to flip the conversation a little bit from soft power to hard power. And instead of looking at Russian money, looking at British companies, what their role is, continuing to do business with the Russian Federation. There was a terrific piece in Catherine Belton's paper, the *Financial Times,* by Gillian Tett just a week ago that points out with the mobilization undertaken by the Russian government now, foreign companies which have business operations in Russia now must mobilize their employees to join. So their financial resources, their human resources are being deployed in the war against Ukraine. And

so the question is, could British journalists with the investigative skills represented on the panel today, reflect a bit about the ongoing role of British corporations in the Russian Federation? And what can be done to cast a light on this with a view to suspending that collaboration?

Vadym Karpiak: Catherine, Oliver, would you like to comment or would you like to say something?

Catherine Belton: I would say, I think, yes, we need to look at this a lot more closely and at the moment, I don't have a full list of the UK companies who are still active in Russia. But obviously Gillian Tett's comment was very, very pertinent. And it should be a signal, that anyone is still there, and I'm surprised – anyone who's still there really just has to get out. And I actually wanted to make an addendum, if I may digress a little, about the role of culture and politics. And we have one very live example in the UK, and that is Alexander Lebedev, who has used culture to make great inroads into the UK political scene. He's a former KGB officer. He's bought several UK newspapers, the *Evening Standard,* the *Independent* and his own son, as editor of those newspapers has acquired himself the title Lord of Siberia. And just to show how damaging and how obsequious ownership of institutions like this can be, we recently had the *Independent* host an article questioning whether Putin not being invited to the Queen's funeral was too much of a humiliation for the Russian president. And to even raise a question like that, and give an article like that a headline in one of the UK's main newspapers is really just shocking. And it's just a really a very telling example of the power and subversive kind of activities that these arms of the Kremlin are still getting up to in the UK. So I think we're still looking at that flipside, though. This question that's been raised is a very relevant one. We need to look at it more closely.

Vadym Karpiak: Thank you, Catherine. Oliver, do you know any cases about British companies that continue cooperating with Russia, maybe through offshore accounts or offshore companies, businesses?

Oliver Bullough: I don't. I confess, like Catherine, I haven't got a list. I mean, I would be surprised if there were any significant companies that were, because

the reputational damage would be so enormous. However, there is the colossal exception to that, which is that we have not yet obviously decarbonized our trade with Russia. We continue to buy oil and gas from Russia, not just the UK, but Europe as a whole. And that, I think, continues to be a disgrace that we're not moving more quickly on that. You know, in a way, it doesn't really matter if our companies are in Russia or not, if we're continuing to prop up the Kremlin by buying as much oil and gas as we have been. So, you know, I would like to see far greater urgency on that question from our government. And it's very disappointing that we haven't really seen it.

Vadym Karpiak: I understand. Are there any questions from the audience?

Audience member: I have a comment about politics and culture, especially when it comes to Russia. I believe that this is 100 per cent merged, funding and lobbying, and this is one of the weapons or types of weapons that Russia is using very effectively, especially in Great Britain. But I have a question for our panellists. Do you think that it's time to use Ukrainian culture as one of the forms to counter Russian culture? Because you remember that in Soviet times it was Soviet culture, then it became Russian culture, and before the beginning of this war, everything that was presented worldwide was labelled as Russian culture, but it could have been Ukrainian product.

Vadym Karpiak: Misha, has Ukrainian culture become more visible for you?

Misha Glenny: Well, it's becoming more visible all the time. One area which I'm very interested in is documentary filmmaking. And Ukrainian documentary films are now beginning to garner attention worldwide at some of the most important film fora. And I think there is a renewed interest in Ukrainian culture. It started, though, early in the 1990s. I think that Andrei Kurkov's novel *Death and the Penguin,* alerted people for the first time of a distinct Ukrainian culture and distinct Ukrainian writing. And I have to say, *Death and the Penguin* remains one of my favourite novels of all time, if only because the main character is called Misha, not Misha; or Misha, not Penguin, sorry. It's a marvellous novel. And you are beginning to see Ukrainian writers, Ukrainian films, Ukrainian theatre. And since 24 February, there has been quite an effort, certainly in Europe and the

United Kingdom, to bring Ukrainian culture over. It's very difficult getting a visa for the United Kingdom, unfortunately, at the moment for any sort of activity because of Brexit.

And I do want to take the opportunity to pick up something that Catherine said about Lebedev's elevation to the House of Lords, because I know that Boris Johnson is a very popular figure here in Ukraine, but in the United Kingdom we see it rather differently because the Conservative Party has depended hugely on donations from Russian oligarchs over the years. Whenever there has been an investigation, a parliamentary investigation by the Intelligence Committee of the House of Commons, into Russian money and the Conservative Party, in issues like the Brexit referendum – which was hugely welcomed, the victory of Brexit, by Vladimir Putin – Johnson has tried to cover them up. So, in terms of Russia, Russian penetration into the British establishment, Johnson is a much more ambiguous and even some might say sinister figure in his own country than he is in Ukraine. And incidentally, the intelligence services recommended that Boris Johnson not elevate Evgeny Lebedev to the House of Lords, but he went ahead and did it anyhow.

Vadym Karpiak: It's yet more food for thought for the follow up discussions, because we didn't talk about the impact of Russian politics on our culture. But I believe that this is another topic to discuss. Oliver, the question for you, not as the journalist investigator, but as a person who is very well rounded. How Ukrainian culture became more visible for you in this year?

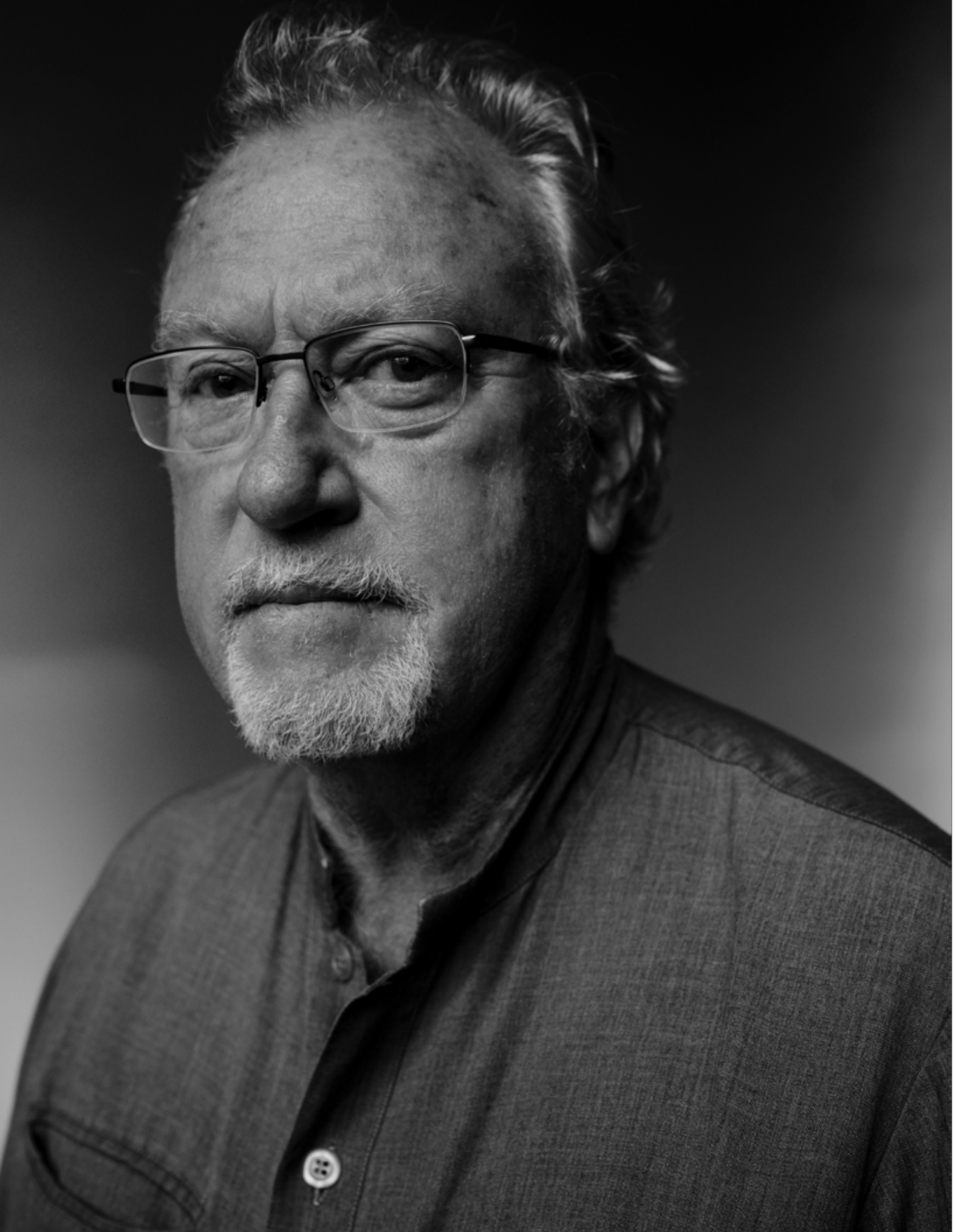
Oliver Bullough: I certainly am very well-rounded. One thing I've really noticed is the prevalence of Ukrainian cookery writers, writing about Ukrainian food. This is something that has not been known at all in the West, but that has been really noticeable. I've taken part in events where Ukrainian food has been served and Ukrainian opera singers have sung Ukrainian songs. Again, I don't think this would have happened before this year. So, you know, it's a slow process. And obviously there will be many writers from Ukraine, whether that's Gogol or whoever, who will be considered by most British people to be Russian, just because of the fact that they're sort of subsumed into Russia, in the same way many people would consider Oscar Wilde to be English rather than Irish. I do think that, sort of, aspects of Ukrainian culture, music and cookery in particular have been really high profile this year, certainly in the circles I move in. And that is, you know, it all adds up. It all leads to more. I mean, Misha men-

tioned Andrei Kurkov, who's been writing a lot about the war in British newspapers and remains much loved among many British readers. So no, I think it's been a good time. I mean, I suppose I've been sorry that I haven't seen a revival of the reggae band 5'nizza, from Kharkiv, who I was a big fan of back in the early 2000s. So I'd like to see them performing again. And then I think my life would be complete.

Vadym Karpiak: Yes, they had pleasant songs, but I think their singer now has a solo career. Catherine, I believe you worked in Moscow for sixteen years, and theoretically, geographically, you were the closest to Ukraine from all of the guests today. How has your perception of Ukrainian culture changed today, if it has?

Catherine Belton: You know, I would just repeat what Oliver said, really. I mean, I'm based in London now. I'm not in Moscow, and I haven't been in Moscow actually since 2014, since the first part of Russia's war against Ukraine. I left in July 2014, just after the [flight] MH17 was downed. But I think in London, certainly, there's great enthusiasm here now for all forms of Ukrainian culture. And I think people want to be very supportive of any orchestra or any company that's here touring. And it really is seen as a way that we can support your nation in your fight against this Russian aggression. So I think all the more Ukrainian culture there is here, the better. And I hope that one day we can be as supportive as possible of the Russians who do want change in their own country. And it will be perceived the same way there one day too.

Vadym Karpiak: Thank you. Do we have any other questions? No, In that case, it's now incumbent on me to thank everyone who has joined us. Thank you very much, Catherine. Thank you very much, Oliver. Misha, I can thank you like this *[shaking hands],* directly, immediately. Thank you, and stay with us in a little while we have our next conversation as part of the BookForum.



The Role of Journalists and Writers in War

Participants: Tetyana Oharkova (Chair), Victoria Amelina, Jon Lee Anderson, Janine di Giovanni, Michael Katakis

Tetyana Oharkova: Welcome, everybody. So very happy to start this panel. I'll be moderating these extraordinary people. My name is Tetyana Oharkova, a Ukrainian literary scholar and journalist myself. And we'll be talking about journalism and journalists and writers during the war. A very – extremely interesting topic. And I'm very happy to present you our panellists today. So, let's start.

Just on my on my left you have Janine di Giovanni, a famous journalist and writer as well. She's travelled a lot across the world and documented and told the story about three genocides. And what is even more important in this context, and our context, that she's a member of The Reckoning Project, which was mentioned yesterday. So we'll be able to talk about both aspects of writer and journalist in this war, which is – we'll be happy to have your remarks.

Victoria Amelina, Ukrainian writer, who we already know, who participated in the previous panel, who travels a lot now across the country, and she's writing the book about what's going on during this war. We know Victoria as a writer and this is your first experience during the war, and we do hope this is the last one, last experience during the war. And Victoria will share her thoughts about why journalists and why writers are important during the conflict, and we'll be happy to discuss all that.

Then the next panellist of our debate is Jon Lee Anderson. Happy to meet you. So you have also travelled a lot, have seen many countries and many conflicts as well. And we count on your insight on how you can compare what is currently going on here in Ukraine with what you've seen during your career in a number of countries. You are author of many books. Your books include *Guerrillas* published in '92, *The Lion's Grave: Dispatches from Afghanistan,* 2002, and *The Fall of Baghdad* in 2004. You're also the author of one of the most important biographies of Ernesto Guevara, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*. And many others. So you'll be able to talk about all that. And we are happy to meet you here during this panel.

And Michael Katakis, if I pronounce correctly your name – you're a writer and a photographer, with also an immense experience of travelling a lot of countries, and writing and photographing different cultures and geographical locations. You've been to China, West Africa, Cuba, India, Hungary, Morocco. Author of many books, among them – if I'm not mistaken, the most popular, the most known – *Dangerous Men.* But many, many others. So in '99, you were elected fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and then later you were appointed Ambassador for the British Library and elected Director of Americans for the British Library.

So, prominent speakers and very interesting people. And we'll try to discuss how the war, how this experience during the war, happens. And what journalists and writers can tell us, and why they are important and what is their impact during the war. I suggest we start with Victoria, just this – because it's her first experience of the war, and she's a writer and not really a journalist, but your experience is important for us, for the whole country. So in your opinion – so my question is, how literature... You were writing fiction before the war. How do you consider your experience during the war and what the war changed for you as a writer?

Victoria Amelina: Thank you very much for your questions, Tetyana. Yes, I was a novelist before the full-scale Russian invasion. Basically, I became a writer, my first novel was published in 2015, the year when Russia first invaded Ukraine, annexed Crimea and started the hybrid war in the Donetsk and Luhansk region, which are casually called Donbas in the West. So I don't have any experience of being a writer in a peaceful country, and my experience of being a novelist was always related to the war experiences around me.

I have immediate family in the Donetsk region, and a lot of friends there, and from Crimea and the Luhansk region. So it was always important to me to write in a way that reflects their experiences. And it was possible from 2015 to 2022. I was able to write so that I can present my books in the – I could present my books in the war-torn east of Ukraine, and people would relate to what I wrote in my books *Dom's Dream Kingdom* and *The Fall Syndrome.* But that changed on February 24th 2022, of course. I have to say that I not only cannot write fiction right now, I was literally speechless for the first days of the war. It was difficult for me to speak, and at first I was even afraid to give any interviews because I started forgetting words, et cetera. So right now, basically, this full-scale Russian aggression and I would say genocidal war against Ukraine is the

reason why I switched from being a novelist to being a war crimes researcher, and also a writer who writes non-fiction documenting war crimes.

And also, I have to mention that I also write about a war crimes researcher who is part of The Reckoning Project, which Janine di Giovanni has started together with Nataliya Gumenyuk. So this war is the reason why I switched from writing fiction to documenting war crimes and writing non-fiction.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you very much, Victoria. So, in a way, we all admit that during the war, reality becomes something more powerful than any kind of fiction, right? So we are, and I fully understand when you [say] that it's difficult trying to invent. Fiction is about invention, but the reality, unfortunately, is so, so powerful that sometimes we lose our words and so we start documenting what we see.

Janine, you have huge experience in that. And you're also a writer, also you present yourself – so you're both writer and journalist. You have an extremely broad view on what was going on, not only here in Ukraine, but also abroad. And you are now part of this Reckoning Project. Would you provide your vision?

Janine di Giovanni: Hi everyone. It's wonderful to be here with all of you and such a great panel. So, I have a really unusual background. I never wanted to be a journalist. I was an academic and on my way to getting a PhD, and I thought I'd have a very quiet life as an academic researching literature. And then one day I picked up a newspaper and it was about the first Palestinian intifada, which means 'uprising' in Arabic. And for some reason, I got on a plane, I went there and I met a woman who changed my life forever. She was a Jewish lawyer, and at that time she was one of the only people defending Palestinians in military court. So, she was the enemy, basically. And she taught me about justice and injustice. And she left me with these words, which changed my life, which were basically: 'If you have the ability to go somewhere and document it, then you have an obligation.' And for her, it was all about bearing witness.

So since that time, I've reported – people say eighteen wars, but I think it's more than that, I've never really sat down and counted them, on many continents. I've published nine books. I'm essentially a writer. I always thought I was a terrible reporter because I never really had the ability to shove my microphone in someone's face and make them talk when they were in deep pain. But what I

do is I go places and I spend a long time, and I try to gain people's trust and I try to embed with them, and try to understand how they live, how they survive through war time. This is my third Putin war. I was in Grozny, Chechnya, when it fell to Russian forces at the end of January of 2000. I spent nearly eight years in Syria covering that terrible war, and on December 16th, 2016, Aleppo fell largely because of Putin's aircraft, which bombed it to hell. And now, Ukraine. So on February 24th, when Peter Pomerantsev phoned me and said, 'What can we do?' I decided that we would found this project, called The Reckoning Project. And we would use our skills as journalists and investigators to document war crimes so that no one could ever say, 'This didn't happen.'

And the reason I say that is, again, what Tetyana said – I've lived through three genocides: Srebrenica, Rwanda and the Yazidis slaughter. In Bosnia and Rwanda, both of those crimes are now being rewritten by revisionist historians who say, 'It didn't happen,' or, 'It didn't happen that way,' or, '8,000 men and boys didn't die', or, in the case of Rwanda, 1 million people, 1 million people were slaughtered in three months – 1 million people. So part of the reason we're doing this, and part of the reason I continue to write books and to write articles, is to put it in a kind of permanent memory. So for your children, your grandchildren, my children, my grandchildren forevermore, no one will ever be able to say, 'This didn't happen,' and, 'It didn't happen like this.'

For me, essentially what drives me as a writer are two things. The first is justice, and that is always at my very core. It's about giving a voice to people who do not have a voice. So, bearing witness. And the other one is the politics of memory and making sure that the narrative remains and that truth is at the very heart of it. And just the final thing I'll say is that people always say to me, 'Wow,' – you know, I realized the other day, more than half of my life actually has been spent in war zones. So I have a very distorted view of the world. But despite it all, I still, you know, actually have an optimistic view of humanity because I've seen extraordinary things happen in war time and bravery of ordinary people. I feel so honoured to have this work. I don't – people always say, 'You must be so messed up, and you must have so many issues, and how can you live a life like that?' But it's the contrary. I feel absolutely honoured and privileged that I've been able to tell the stories of ordinary people and to give them a voice. Especially people whose wars are not covered or not – for instance, now Syria is all but forgotten. Yemen is forgotten. There's a war in Ethiopia that no one is reporting. There are the Uyghurs in China, there's the Rohingyas, there's many, many conflicts going on in the world. And I just feel incredibly honoured to be here in Ukraine and to be able to spend the next few years here recording so that no one ever forgets. Thank you.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you very much, Janine. So we'll come back later to you, asking what the difference in this war you're observing already here in Ukraine with what you've seen before. My question goes to Lee. Would you explain, Jon Lee, what is your take on what's going on here? And how do you think the work of writers and journalists is important during the war – especially during the war? And what is – according to you, is there any difference in these two roles, journalist and writer? Just three questions in one.

Jon Lee Anderson: First of all, I think I should answer by saying I often am in the position, these last few years, of having very young journalists come to me and saying, 'What do I have to do to become a war correspondent?' And the first thing I say to them is, 'What is it about being a war correspondent that makes you want to become one?' You know, 'Have you ever been to war? Do you know what that is?' And one has an idea that they have a glamourised idea of what a war correspondent is, because of the way it's been presented in literature, movies, fiction, and so on. And they say, 'Well, what is the most important thing for me to know?' And I say, 'To know why you're there.' Because you can go for the wrong reasons. And there's no moral handbook for what you encounter in a war, in a conflict. There isn't really for ordinary civilians, who are confronted with the business of killing and dying all around them. And there isn't for journalists either.

I find it interesting what you were just saying, Victoria. And I know that Andrei Kurkov, he wrote an essay saying fiction has now lost its meaning and now we must record history. And it resonated deeply with me. Like Janine, I've covered a lot of conflicts over the years in many places. And sometimes people ask me: 'Do you ever want to write fiction?' And to be honest, at a certain point, most journalists or many journalists, you know, go on to do a novel or something, or they think they have a novel in them. I've never – I've searched and I've never found one, you know. And for a while I thought, 'Well, there's something wrong with me', because, you know, I'm a writer at war, but I have no novel. And I finally realized it was that: the reality was enough.

We have had journalists–writers in the past who became quite famous with their oeuvre, mostly in the form of books, like Ryszard Kapuscinski. But he did so usually after the fact, and as we now know as well, he engaged in a certain amount of fictionalization. It doesn't take away from the excellence of his prose or the incredible literary legacy he had, but it is questionable from the point of view of a journalist – how much do you alter the truth? When you're in any re-

ality, when you're in any circumstance, you have to frame it in a certain way in order to present it as a story. We use, sometimes, literary devices in order to construct the story. You're, on the one hand, forced with the challenge of making something that people will read – we're talking about writing here – whether it's a piece of journalism or a longer piece, say, a book. But at the same time, wanting to be fair, wanting to be truthful, wanting to be sincere, wanting to… And there's an inherent, you know, ethical line, a risk there. Some people cross it, other people don't as much. But it's a bit like going to war itself. There's always the possibility of crossing a moral line and then having to, kind of, pay the consequences for it. I say this because for me it's the most important thing. That's what I'd say, that's what I tell young journalists. I've had some come to me, since the Ukraine war started and they're saying: 'I really want to go to Ukraine.' And I think: well, why? What do you have to offer? What are you bringing to the table that Ukrainians, or other people, who may have perhaps more experience than Non-Ukrainians – can already be saying, 'What is it that you personally can do?'

What we see nowadays, kind of, responding to your question about how I see coverage of Ukraine – I think that was one of them – is that we have a, kind of, almost a surfeit of information. It's sort of emblematic of the time we live in: we have a surfeit of information generally. We have iPhones. We have smartphones in our pockets. They're like magic mirrors to the world, but they carry all kinds of horror. They carry disinformation. They carry, I don't know… it's like an addictive substance. And, somehow, we seem to be living in a world where there's less and less knowledge, more and more unreason, more and more – societies are becoming more faith-based, if anything. And increasingly, formerly rational-seeming societies are becoming extreme, as we're seeing with Russia today. And we saw recently – and we're seeing increasingly in Western countries as well. So I think there's a new challenge in this time of immediate information.

Going back twenty years, it was – newspaper men and women would lament the arrival of 24-hour television news. When CNN became a factor in the world, thirty years ago, you know, it was this thing of, 'How do you feed the beast?' You can see it even today. There's a lot of frippery there. There's a lot of polemicising, there's a lot of punditry. And it seems less and less actual, just, authentic coverage of events. To a certain extent – then you have the blogosphere, and then everything else that we've seen since then, the kind of weaponization of information.

It's complicated. I write long stories, I sometimes write shorter ones, and try to keep doing what I've always done, which is to find something original to say. If I

don't think I have something original to say, I abstain, usually. And sometimes – and I don't mean I abstain absolutely, I have an opinion. I can divide myself. I can do opinion pieces where I feel I have an audience, I can try to influence people about something I feel is wrong, usually. And then I do these longer pieces that hopefully inform people in the influential circles of decision-makers and policymakers. I'm lucky because I write for a magazine that is read by those sorts of people.

In the last panel, Philippe Sands said that he wrote his column after February 24th in the *FT* for that very reason. I'm lucky that I have this outlet that is read by people of influence. You mentioned Ethiopia, Janine. My last story, which came out a couple of weeks ago, in fact, was about Ethiopia. I went there this last summer. You're absolutely right, it's the great under-covered war. Some people have argued to me, or lamented, Africanists, that Ukraine is getting all the coverage. That Ethiopia, where there's almost World War I-style, sort of, suicide attacks and apparently tens of thousands of casualties, there's nobody there. Why? Because the regime, which controls the turf to get access to Tigray, where the fighting is going on, doesn't allow it.

Now, how did I go about covering this war? I, sort of, didn't cover the war, but I had unusual access to the leader of the country. So, and here is where I want to just wind up, in this business of trying to report on wars, one of the things I've found over the years, and not really by design, but by intuition, I've tended to try to seek out the perpetrators. Because victims are everywhere. And I don't mean to sound condescending or patronizing or cruel about victims, but victims are the first people you find. Of every sort. And after a certain point – maybe that can change with different forms of coverage, projects like The Reckoning Project, other ways to present their stories and also to seek justice for them. That's great. But as a journalist, you hit a wall. You tell the victim's story, and it's a bit like – it becomes white noise after a while. It's a bit like those pages in magazines where, you know, they try to raise money, showing you a little child with flies on his face and they want you to give ten dollars to feed them. Nobody really likes to look at that picture, and I think most people skip it because it causes – it makes you feel bad. Maybe some people donate, I don't know. But it doesn't tell you anything new. You feel you've seen it before. So I've tried to seek out the perpetrators very often. In this case, I was with the maximum perpetrator. I was with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. It's a different story about how I got the access to him. He didn't really want to talk about the war. And so in the month I spent with him and around him, I tried in every way to see the war through his omission of it, through his behaviour. And that's the

story I wrote. So, do I know the total truth about Ethiopia? No. Do I take us to the battleground? No. But I take you to the palace of the man who began it, who is prosecuting the war, and perhaps, I don't know, perhaps, we learn something about the figure of power who is the architect of the war. This is just a recent example. There are others that are more, maybe, more applied. And I guess it goes back to what I was saying in the beginning, what I tell youngsters, and I'll just end with a very quick anecdote about early in my career.

I was a stringer for *Time* magazine in Central America at the time of civil wars there. I worked for *Time* magazine, which had a certain way of looking at the world. And as a young reporter, you're dependent on the publication you work for, whether it's a television station or a podcast or maybe a website today, on how your story, what you see, is going to be framed. So on the one hand … I was frustrated on two counts because I thought of myself as first and foremost as a writer who tried to learn how to be a reporter. And they rewrote everything I said. Everything I reported was rewritten. So the lines that I came up with that I thought were *[chef's kiss],* you know, that I sweated over, just disappeared. And it was turned into Times-speak. And then I was frustrated on a second level because they had a political point of view. And when I was in El Salvador, the US had a policy to try to, kind of, put a glove on it. You could say a velvet glove, on the excesses and atrocities committed by the side they were supporting in the war.

And as just a quick example of the kind of challenges I think young journalists, especially, face – and any journalist, in trying to report on the reality – is they wanted me to cover a military operation that was supposedly successful against the guerrillas. The man who was leading it had carried out what is the largest massacre in the Western hemisphere in over a century – the thousand, mostly women and children, two years before. I had to spend three days with this man, at no point did my editors ask me, 'Find out what he has to say about that.' That's not what they were interested in. But it was all I could think about during those three days: how to ask him about the massacre he had committed. The way they were framing their news coverage dictated that I asked him about how successful his counterinsurgency operation, presently, was. And that, I think, gets to the crux of why, ever since, I've made an effort to try to talk to perpetrators. Because unless we hear from them, their truth, we don't really know about the sort of inner alchemy of war, what their thinking is, and what's likely to happen next.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you very much, extremely interesting. And so, what would it mean – we'll get back to that – what would it mean to interview Putin today, or not? Exactly.

So, Michael, what is your vision of this? The primary question we're discussing, about the importance of journalists and writers during the war, as being an extremely important and tragic experience.

Michael Katakis: Well, the chroniclers of what is happening is profoundly important. We all know that. But we are in a very dangerous period right now, as all people are, in conflict. And that danger is beyond Russia. The danger now is there is a very short distance between being a chronicler, a writer, a photographer, a truth teller, if that's what you want to call it, moving into propagandist and advocate. Now, we have seen this happen many times in history. Let me give you an example. Ernest Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn in the Spanish Civil War. They knew that John Dos Passos' friend, Professor José Robles Pazos, was not a fascist spy. He was murdered because he was not sympathetic to the Stalinist view. But they lied, and they lied because they had an agenda. And the agenda was they so believed in the cause, or so they said, but maybe there was another agenda. And that agenda happened, and was revealed, when Hemingway was with Martha Gellhorn, John Dos Passos and his wife, where John Dos Passos kept asking: 'What have these people done to Professor Robles?' And Hemingway pulled him aside in front of everyone and said, 'If you keep talking about this, and reporting it, the left publishers in New York will not publish your books.' And Dos Passos' wife turned to him and said, 'That's the most cynical, opportunist thing I have ever heard.' And then what do we get? We get wonderful literature – *For Whom the Bell Tolls* – using the material. Isn't it wonderful? No, it is not wonderful. There was a deception going on, as there was with Mr Matthews of the *New York Times,* who – whether you like Castro or don't like Castro, is irrelevant; he became an advocate for Mr Castro. He ceased to be a journalist. He ceased to be seeking what was true.

And this happens again and again. It happens with Christopher Hitchens with Iraq. Some say he's a journalist. He's not a journalist, he's a writer. He had a voice, and he used his voice and words. This was an incredibly intelligent man, and he was a brilliant man. And he didn't believe for one minute that Dick Cheney was telling the truth, but he had friends in Iraq and he disliked Saddam Hussein, and he thought the world would be better without him. Now, if you want to be a true chronicler, in my opinion, a more honest one, you must put yourself in

the story because you already are in the story. You're a story within the story. You are reporting something that's filtering through your biases, through your experiences. So don't hide it. Bring it out and show that you're having a struggle with this.

Now, with all that said, with all that said, we are human beings. We choose sides. I've already chosen mine here. But if tomorrow morning – I have no doubt, if tomorrow morning Ukraine became more like Russia, I'd be against you. So the fact is, I'm trying to find out, as difficult as it is, I'm trying to get close to the truth, whatever that truth is, and not lose my humanity in the process and not become a propagandist for anyone. I don't come to Ukraine, when I'm looking to find out the truth, to be your friend. To have respect for Ukraine is trying to seek the truth of what is happening. That's how I see it.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you, Michael, it's a powerful statement, maybe we'll come back to this – *[audience applause]*. We see the reaction of our audience. So, let's get back, maybe, to a particular case to this war. We are in Ukraine. We are discussing Ukraine now, maybe a little bit egotistical of us, but let's maybe discuss this war, this experience, which is particular [to] us, [including] with Victoria.

Maybe a case between others, for you, with all your experience you've had – you've seen many, many things in many different countries. But my question would be about some unique situation, some unique experience you've had with Ukraine, if you compare to your previous experience. Janine, let's start with you.

Janine di Giovanni: Thank you. So I keep thinking back to Chechnya. Chechnya in 1999, 2000, the second Chechen war, and I was told… 1999 was a terrible year for me in terms of war. It started out with the war in Kosovo, which was a seventy-eight-day war. Humanitarian intervention basically launched because the world felt guilty about Bosnia and the genocide at Srebrenica, where nothing had been done until it was too late. So Bill Clinton launched this strange NATO war to protect the Kosovar Albanians. Then it went on to East Timor where there was a violent uprising. And then I was in Africa for about eight months. So at the end of the year, my editors said, 'You need to go to Chechnya fast, because the war is turning.' Of course, I couldn't get a visa for Russia. I still, you know, now I'm PNG'd [persona non grata] from Russia, I can't go anyway. But then I

couldn't and the only way to get in was through Ingushetia or to climb through the mountains of Georgia. So, I somehow did get in and I arrived just as Grozny was falling.

And before I arrived, a colleague of mine, Miguel, who I had been with in Sarajevo – we lived in Sarajevo during the siege – said to me, 'Janine, before – two weeks before you begin to go mad from the aerial bombardment, tell the Chechen commanders to begin to get you out, because it will take two weeks for you to be extracted, to get over the mountains and to leave. So you have to judge for yourself when you're beginning to go insane.' And I didn't really understand what he meant until I got there. And I saw the absolute level of destruction. It was as though Grozny was a parking lot. They had just completely wiped it out, not just to win the war, it was almost this symbol of 'We will crush you. We will absolutely destroy every living thing.' And one thing I will never forget as long as I live, is that I wandered into this house after Grozny had fallen, which was a house of the blind. There were only blind people there and there was no roof, and half of it had been blown away. So the staircase was open to the air. But all these people were sitting there very patiently, with their white sticks and their sunglasses. And I walked in and I said, 'What are you waiting for? Why are you here?' And they said, 'We're waiting for someone to come help us.' And they had been sitting there through the worst of the bombardment. And of course, if you're blind, you're hearing is even more sensitive. So they were in extreme duress. All of the helpers had run away. And here's the thing, most of them were ethnic Russians, so they weren't even Chechen. But the people who can never run away – and this is the same as Ukraine, when you go into some of the liberated villages – it's always the most vulnerable. It's always the poor, the elderly, the handicapped, the people that don't have the money to run away, or the relatives, or a car. And so they just stay and they live with this unbelievable fear.

So Chechnya, for me, I did get out. And then, of course, I was all over Russian television, my stories, because I was one of the – there was just myself, a German photographer and a French journalist somewhere else. And there was no UN, there was no Médecins Sans Frontières. We were alone. So the Russians published it and basically, of course, I was there without a visa, so I had to get out before the Russians came in. And that was a whole other saga.

Aleppo, Syria, second Putin war. Again, the same absolute Putin playbook – I call it 'Putin's gruesome playbook' – which is to basically hit as many civilian, heavily residential areas, hospitals. In Syria, the main issue, and something I really worked on for a long time, was the targeting of medical facilities and hospitals. Why? Because if you kill one doctor, you kill a hundred people, you

kill an entire community. And in Syria, especially, doctors were absolutely vital, in Aleppo. By the time Aleppo fell in 2016, I think there was about two or three triages left. And I would spend, I mean, I'm always – in wars, I usually go to hospitals because I like to be with doctors because they're very pragmatic, they're really hardworking. And you kind of get a sense of what's going on with the war. And I like to, kind of, live in the hospital. And I saw the most terrible things, and it wasn't related to war. It was, you know, children that were being born during war time who were dying because the electricity was out and there was no incubators for premature babies. Or people who were dying of respiratory things that could have been cured in normal time. And despite all this, Putin kept bombing, and bombing and bombing. And when he entered the war in 2015, there was a chance – there was one point, one window, when the opposition, the Syrian opposition, really could have turned it around. And I blame many things. I blame the West for not – in 2013, after the chemical attacks, for not getting involved. But anyway, Putin saw this great opening in 2015, sends in his warplanes and begins to obliterate Aleppo in the same way he obliterated Grozny.

And it wasn't just a matter, again, of taking territory, of hitting military facilities, of taking out tanks. It was about destroying civilians. It was about inflicting fear at the very heart of the community so that people would fall to their knees. And even though Aleppo fell, and the day it fell, I remember I cried because I felt: we've – my colleagues and I, my Syrian friends, the opposition, the fighters worked so hard for, basically, what were they fighting for? They just wanted to have freedom. They did not want oppression from an authoritarian, brutal regime of the Assad family. They wanted the ability to vote without being told who to vote for. And it fell. It fell to Putin and to Assad.

And now we're in Ukraine. So what we're doing at The Reckoning Project, one of the things, is we're identifying patterns. And the patterns to me are so clear. It's mainly attacks against civilians. It's extrajudicial killing. It's the people in Bucha who were pulled out of the basements of their houses and shot in the head or the neck. It's the torture, it's the detention, it's the filtration – I hate that word – filtration camp. It's the trafficking of children across borders, taken to Russia to be adopted. It's the Russification, it's the attempts to obliterate Ukrainian identity, whether it's by the language or by the bombing of cultural facilities. So all of these things come together, for me, to form this – Putin's playbook. And it's really about bringing people to their knees. And I know Ukraine never will be. So that's why he's sitting in Moscow right now, absolutely furious.

Yeah. And so I'll just really end it on, for me, the main thing in war time is documenting civilians. I never was one of these reporters who loved to embed with the American Army. It's just not my thing. The real stories are the human stories, the stories that happen every single day. How people survive, how they raise their children. How they – how they managed in Yahidne in the basement … How did they manage in that month to feed their kids with just that mouldy bread and the pasta that was covered with petrol? How did they manage to breathe? How did they sleep? So when we can capture, as writers, these kind of details, we can bring that story to people across the world, who support Ukraine, there is a big support for Ukraine, but they really don't understand it. They don't get it. And it's our job in a sense, to take that micro, the small stories, and make it into the macro so that we can explain the larger – the geopolitics, the analysis of what is happening here. So thank you very much. *[Audience applause]*

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you, Janine. You were talking about patterns of Putin's playbook, so as if it was all the same war, like in Grozny, Chechnya, and then in Syria and then in Ukraine. And maybe we'll come back to discussion [of] if there are any differences, even if the resistance is different, or some other stories. But we value really what you are doing for civilians and for the victims.

Victoria, I guess you cannot compare it to any other war but maybe, anyway, your vision – in which way do you see and you understand this war is particularly unique?

Victoria Amelina: Thank you. In fact, we do compare it to – I mean, we Ukrainians, do compare it to other wars as well. For example, I was watching the destruction of Grozny in Chechnya on the TV when I was a kid. And so, I actually – I knew about the Russian cruelty, in a way. And the situation we have now is the result of Russian impunity that they enjoyed for so long. They enjoyed it in Grozny. They enjoyed it in Aleppo and many other places…

Tetyana Oharkova: Georgia.

Victoria Amelina: Georgia, Libya, many places where Wagner Group fought, so, you name it. And, actually, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the starting

of the war in Ukraine. And, basically, we were… Perhaps I was more ready for 2022 than, even, many other Ukrainians, because I worked as a volunteer and as a writer in the east of Ukraine. I founded a literary festival in the Donetsk region, and so I was really close to the people there and I knew what was going on [in] the temporarily occupied territories. For example, I knew that there are concentration camps. I knew that people are being tortured there, women are raped, et cetera, et cetera. I mean, for example, to my festival in the Donetsk region – the Niu York Literature Festival, because the town, the small town was and is still called Niu York – I invited the parents of a young boy, Stepan Chubenko, who come from the Donetsk region, from Kramatorsk. You all know this city from the news now. So Stepan Chubenko was just a schoolboy, and he supported Ukraine, which is a normal thing to do when you are a Ukrainian schoolboy in Kramatorsk. He didn't do nothing extraordinary, but he had some Ukrainian symbol, like the flag you all love now, blue and yellow. Nothing – nothing special. And he was tortured. This kid was tortured and then shot by the occupiers. So – and I talked to his parents. His parents are incredible, they have this strength to tell the story of their son, to keep his memory.

We had several stories like that before. I mean, since 2014. But… It's just the scale what changed in 2022, but not the nature of it. So I already knew that when, unfortunately, when the Russian Empire – and I don't want to call it Federation because it's so centralized, Russia is more centralized than Ukraine, for instance, or the United States or whatever. So we know that when Russian Empire invades, it creates torture centres, it creates, essentially, concentration camps, et cetera. So we were ready for this to happen. And, unfortunately, I was not surprised. I wasn't shocked when we saw what we saw in Bucha and Irpin after the liberation, because this, unfortunately, was my expectation of what they would do to civilians. But still, this is a very traumatic experience and we will have to work with that.

And, as Janine already mentioned, justice is what matters now. And this is why I'm writing a book, which is called *War and Justice Diary,* and I'm writing about people who, like colleagues of Janine, document war crimes. I can say that this is an unprecedented phenomenon in Ukraine, because we have so many war crimes committed that there are not enough prosecutors, policemen to document all the war crimes. For example, just a couple of weeks ago, we went to Balakliia and we uncovered additional torture chambers in the basements of the buildings. And we had to contact a security service of Ukraine and ask them to come in with their laboratory, because it is important to take the DNA samples, et cetera, et cetera. Things we volunteers cannot do. We just collect

the testimonies. We know the procedures, we were properly trained, but we cannot do the rest of the job. We do not have any laboratory. And people were already ready to, you know, refurbish the place because they didn't want to have bloodstains in their basement.

So it is very important to understand this Ukrainian quest for justice is now, I think, unprecedented. It's not only taking pictures, but basically people like Janine's team, or like Truth Hounds, [who] I'm also working with, or the Center for Civil Liberties, who's awarded a Peace Nobel Prize now, and many, many other organizations, like Helsinki Group and others, are documenting war crimes and helping in this way the law enforcement system.

But I would also – I would like to reflect on the impartiality. I'm in two roles now. Of course, I'm a writer and, as Michael Katakis said, it is very important to make it clear and to put yourself into the story explicitly. This is what I'm doing when I'm writing my book, this *War and Justice Diary.* Of course it is obvious that I'm Ukrainian, so I didn't just pick my side – well, I picked my side. I could have picked other side as well. My first language is Russian, so I could have picked other side. But when I'm a war crimes documenter, of course I document what I see. And if, for example, I come to a house to search for testimony of a civilian killing which we know about, and, at the same time, I see a shell and it might have come from the Ukrainian side, I document it. And it is very important. And this is why I'm sure that the Ukrainian law enforcement systems and Ukrainian human rights defenders do their job documenting war crimes, regardless of who committed them.

But I have to say that we keep advocating for [an] international hybrid tribunal for the crimes committed by the Russian side, because this number of crimes is so enormous that no law enforcement system in the world can cope with them. And we don't – we don't see any evidence that we would need such help for the Ukrainian side. *[Audience applause]*

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you, Victoria. See, we have a lot of reaction during this panel, so people do agree with what you are saying. Janine was talking about patterns which were repeated in various wars, and Victoria told that she was prepared for what you've seen in Izium and in Bucha and et cetera.

Jon, what is your opinion – and let's come back, maybe, to your idea about starting talking to the aggressor. So nobody would agree that this war is unique, in a way, even if we feel for us it's something really unique. What is your vision of

the character of this war, of this Russian war against Ukraine now? Are there any things which are fundamentally different from what happened before? And maybe in terms of the end of the story – maybe this will be an exception, if Ukraine and when Ukraine wins this war?

Jon Lee Anderson: Yeah. Yes, maybe it will be the exception. In a way, I mean, I was listening to Janine talking about Putin's wars that she's covered and it made me think about – maybe it's the Russian way of war. Because, you know, a long time ago I was in Afghanistan, before 9/11, at the end of the 1980s, and I was with the then-Afghan mujahideen, before Al Qaida, who were fighting against the Soviets. And I spent several months with the Afghans going through their towns and villages in the south. And nowhere did I see a house intact. Every single house had been hit by a rocket, bombed. And even after they withdrew officially, in '88, they bombed. They continued to bomb. And at any one moment you could see three or four jets in the sky. By then, the mujahideen had stingers, and so they fired off flares, but they continued to bomb and they also fired scuds in to the… And so it was a charnel land. It was, you know, it's long forgotten now, but maybe 2 million Afghans died at the hands of the Soviets at the last gasp of the Soviet Union. And then we've seen everything since. But I was not surprised, when I was watching Aleppo. I was there before the Russians entered the war, but I was fascinated, fascinated and horrified, if I have to say, to watch their pattern of behaviour in the war. It's, as Janine said, it's – you hit civilian targets, you demoralize the population, and then you hit them in the hospitals. So the fighters are at the front, and the only place their wounded – children, wives – have to go – parents – they get killed there, too. And you kill the doctors. In fact, they bombed the last hospital in Aleppo. And it was only after that that the fighters sued for peace, basically, and were allowed a safe corridor out.

So, I – when this war began, I could see the same pattern beginning. When they hit hospitals, they're doing it on purpose. When they hit civilian infrastructure, they're doing it on purpose. There's no doubt about that. And there's – a long time ago, a very, kind of, cruel commander, one of these people, who I said – believe me, it's not like I don't… I would rather be with the victims than with the perpetrators, It's just the way it worked out. And I realized that sometimes you could find out things from them about the way they thought. And this one very cruel Nicaraguan guerrilla commander told me about how they used the youngest recruits to kill the prisoners and people they regarded as traitors, usually by beating them to death. And this was in that war. I was horrified. And I said, 'Well,

why would you use the youngest ones? The fourteen-year olds?' And he said, 'Because they haven't learned a conscience yet.' And [he said it] like, 'Come on, don't you know that?' And at my look of horror, he said, *'Mira,* John, there's two ways to fight a war: *a las buenas y a las malas,* both work.' You can do it according to the rules. Or you can just go for it. It works. So they were just going for it. *'A las malas'* means with evil, basically with evil intent. And that's the way the Russian wars are fought. That's the way Grozny was flattened. It's the way they fought in Afghanistan and it's the way they're fighting here, I'm terribly sorry to say.

It is no mistake when the Ukrainians, you know, you hit the bridge the other day… You knew that they were going to do something painful. And they have. They've killed intentionally civilians in Zaporizhzhia, and so on. I fully expect them to do more acts of cruelty like this. Again, I'm sorry to say, it's terrible to even know that this is going to happen. It's happening in full view of the world. I think the one thing, the one thing that has become obvious to everybody, and that is a virtue – perhaps one of the few of this very transparent, in some ways, interconnected world we have, we live in – is that the cruelty and the mayhem that's being inflicted is obvious. That is to say, most of the world understands that this was an unprovoked war. And its deliberate cruelty is astonishing. And I was struck a few days ago, maybe it was about a week ago, there was a gun killing in a school somewhere in Russia. Something that happens every other day in the United States, but it happened in Russia. And Putin lamented this act of terrorism against these innocent children, as if, with a kind of cognitive dissonance, as if he wasn't in fact doing the same thing every day in Ukraine. The perversity, the surreal perversity of this war and what he's doing is quite apparent to the world in a way that maybe previous wars weren't.

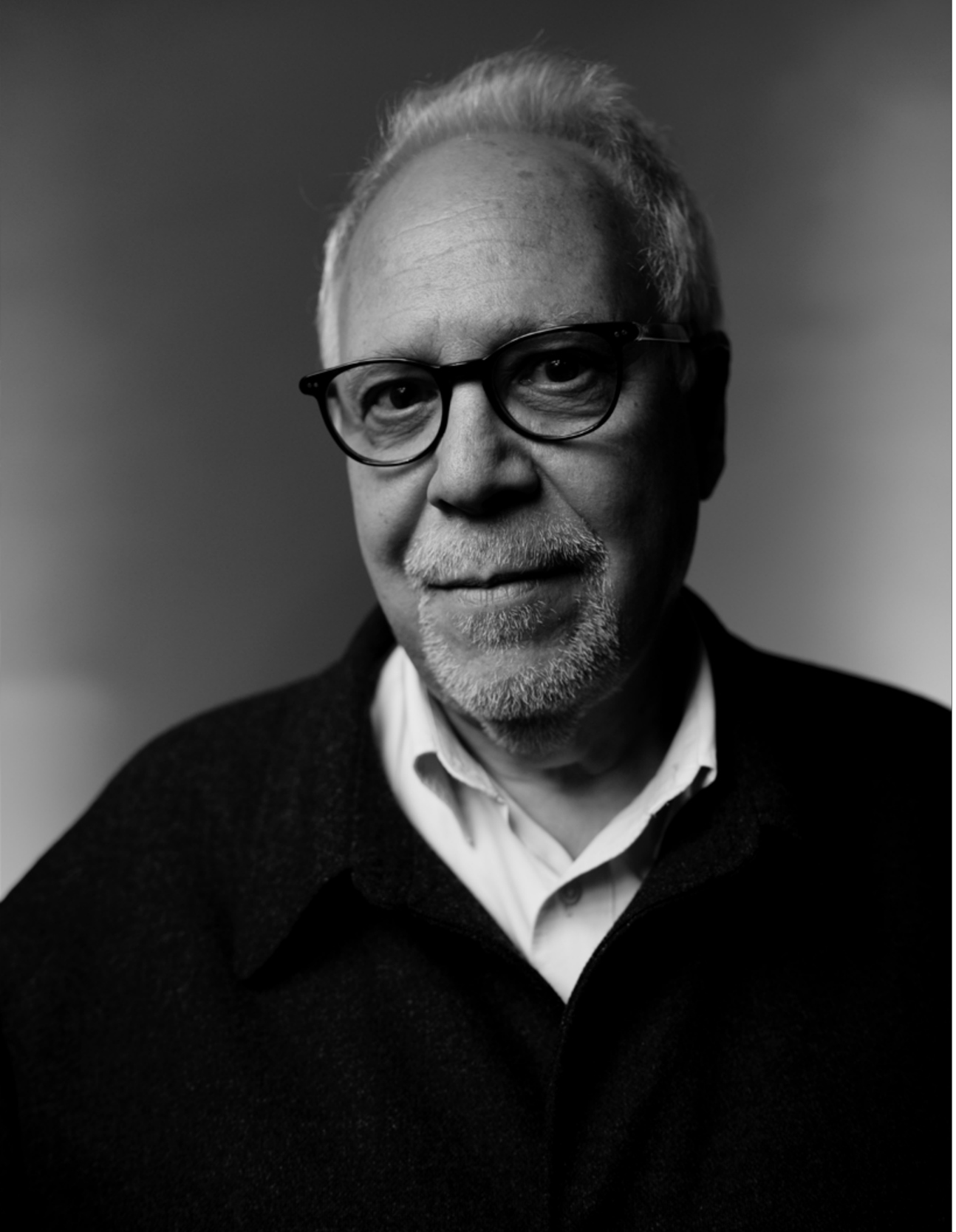
And that was why I talked a little bit earlier about, for journalists, the challenges in knowing why you're there and how to frame it. And also, who you're working for, how they are framing it. Because I have been in places where nobody wanted to know, you know. Or I was in a place where because of the frame, the political frame, war crimes were overlooked, as in the case of the United States in El Salvador, in that particular period. I once was an eyewitness to the aftermath of a massacre in Uganda. Pre-Rwanda. Pre-war Rwanda – I say this on purpose – where I literally was the first person in the village, and I encountered people who were still dying – dead and still dying in front of me, right? And I tried my – I was nobody, I was just a freelance reporter. I tried to report this story. Nobody was interested. Nobody was interested. Nobody was interested in African stories. I'm generalizing very broadly, but that's basically the truth, you know. This was a kind of tribal conflict off there, it didn't really

matter, it had no… so again, there I was. And I had a friend who had – who was there with me. He was taking pictures. This massacre was never documented. Nobody ever heard about it. It was never written about. And the photographs were never seen. Why? Because at that moment, nobody cared. It was only after Rwanda that people thought: 'Uh-oh, we better not ignore Africa again.' And so they think massacre, genocide, Rwanda, every time.

But it's just a long way of saying that – how, in this case, going back to your question, how Ukrainians present themselves to the world. How they framed their conflict, how they established and owned the narrative of their struggle vis-a-vis Putin's war, has been essential, has been crucial and I think will continue to be. It's very interesting to see how President Zelensky has been able to become a figure who is known to everyone in the world, speaks to everyone in the world every day, Ukrainians and beyond. This is an unusual, an unusually media-savvy, I don't mean that in a cynical way, media-conscious government. And it has been and is essential for that to continue to overcome the very nefarious deceptions of the Russians, who clearly, in Putin's Russia, operate within a bubble in which, bizarrely, a lot of the population and sadly, tragically, in some cases, infuriatingly, don't seem to see or feel what their Army is doing here. And so, again, I think that, you know, there is both an actual war and a war of duelling narratives. And so it's essential both for the Ukrainians and the people who have come in solidarity with them, myself included, to find ways to maintain the upper hand in that battle for public opinion. And it can only be built upon ever-increasing, I think, transparency and sincerity and honesty. Like you were saying, [Victoria], if the shell came from the Ukrainian side, it may be – it may hurt and it may not count compared to the 800 shells that have landed from the Russian side. But it's better, and it'll make the case stronger, if that is also known and documented and owned up to. Yeah.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you very much, Jon. So, Michael, your vision on what is particular in this war with what you've seen before. We were talking about the similarities; so most people agree that there are the same tactics used by the aggressor, but it might be [there are] some differences in the response in this war. It might define the future differences in the outcome, we do hope. What is your vision?

Michael Katakis: If I understand your question… Could you repeat the question for me?



Tetyana Oharkova: My question is whether you see if there is any unique nature in the war we are living now in Ukraine? Or you'd rather stress some similarities with what you've seen, observed and documented before?

Michael Katakis: I don't think this is different, quite frankly. The savagery is there, the depth is there. Everything that comprises war is there, the aggressor. I think what makes it… For me, in a time where things are so obtuse, this is a rather just cause. People are defending themselves against an aggressor. But again, I'm sorry to go back to what I said before. There is a saying that goes, 'Myth is what never was, but always is.' And chroniclers have the ability to actually create damage if they create a false narrative or an emotional narrative about what's happened.

For instance, we were talking earlier today, and let's say you do get an international court very much involved. And there are people like the Hemingways or the Gellhorns or those kinds of people who – the people who have been abused want to use that information, and it turns out that information was fiction. You begin to lose your place, you begin to lose your legitimacy. And so I think that even though we have all these extraordinary tools now, we have cell phones, we have satellites, the same problem exists. Can the chroniclers discipline themselves to search out, as best they can, what is true, and do battle with their own bias? I had a serious bias in Sierra Leone. So much so that I was filled with rage. I wanted to kill someone. I really – and I'm sure many people here felt the same, on this panel. But I had a job to do, and the job was not to be some kind of advocate for these people. My job was to show what was happening. And then you *[gesturing to the room],* it's your responsibility. My job is to bring you the information, that is all. And that's why you see now, for instance, in Washington, DC, all of these journalists who come on TV, they always have to end with a happy note. They can't ask the question too many times because then they won't be invited to the dinner party with the people who grant access to these people. Well, how did we used to do it in the past? We waited for them outside their house. We waited for them to pick up their children at school. We didn't wait to be invited to a dinner party. You searched out the truth.

And now we're in an extreme situation, and it's far more important than the talkity-talk they do on television in Washington. This is very serious, important stuff. This is the recording of history. And you must try to do it properly and with integrity. And we do hope that we will do that.

Victoria Amelina: I just – you asked what is unique about this war in Ukraine. And it just came to me that we are now in Ukraine and I don't think there was any other country under attack that would bring brilliant people together and then talk not only about their conflict, but what we were now mentioning, starting from Chechnya, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, all kinds of places. Because Ukrainians – and this is also the case for the people who are in the trenches, we have been mentioning with Philippe Sands that his translator, the translator of his books into Ukrainian, is fighting in the trenches. Ukrainian writers, some of them are not here today because they are fighting. And for example, Artem Chekh, Artem Chapeye, Artem Polezhaka, and those who – Yaryna Chornohuz, we shouldn't forget about women. So basically, they are fighting there and they also know that they are fighting not only for Ukraine, but they are fighting for the free world, for the values that Ukraine now represents. For the rule of law, democracy, freedom, dignity. And this is very important. These soldiers in the trenches, they become philosophers in a way. There was a movie, a Ukrainian movie, called *Cyborgs,* about Ukrainians defending Donetsk Airport. And some people told me, 'There is such a philosophy in their dialogue, we cannot believe that.' And I said, 'No, no, no. I've been to the front line. Ukrainian soldiers are like that at the front line. They start speaking about the future, of values, et cetera.' So what's unique here is that we know that we are fighting for the free world.

Janine di Giovanni: Thank you for that. I just want to say something. There's a poem, I think it's by Dylan Thomas: 'After the first death, there is no other' – is that Dylan Thomas? I think. Anyway, I often think about that here, when we're going through our witness statements. One morning in Rwanda, 1994, I got up really early and I went for a walk and there was a wall of dead bodies. I'm 5'7" – that's like 170 cm. It was twice my height and it went on two to three miles down the road, of dead people. Mothers holding their children in their arms, just piled up dead. And there were some aid workers who were picking up the bodies and trying to bury them. Jon Lee and I have seen many mass graves in Iraq. I've seen many mass graves in Bosnia. I've stood at the memorial of Srebrenica and seen the rows and rows of headstones of the people who – their bones were buried underneath. But what I think about here, all the time… We're looking at two cases in particular: the train station of Kramatorsk. Am I saying it correctly? And Kremenchuk, the shopping mall.

In both of those cases, what saddens me the most, and what I'm looking at the most carefully are the individual lives. In the shopping mall there was one electrical store where everyone went to get their iPhone fixed or their batteries or

to get a new computer. And people used to hang out and buy Gameboys and whatever. And the witnesses who survived tell us the story, the terrible story, of the day that place was rocketed. Why? You know, it was a shopping mall. People were going there – there was a coffee bar next door where everyone hung out. And then the train station, Kramatorsk. People were fleeing. It was mainly women and children who were there, desperately trying to get away from the war. And they were killed for that.

So my point is about the individual stories. Even though war, to me, amasses these – again, I always think of the million in Rwanda… But it's each individual story that is the most poignant and the most important. And as writers and journalists and photographers and graphic novelists and novelists, this is what we need to capture. So that we can bring it and really amplify this message of the absolute horror of this war.

Michael Katakis: I couldn't agree with you more. It's the stories of people. And let me tell you what I heard this morning, which says more in that one, about this war. Because it brings the humanity of it here. There is a photographer, who you know, Don McCullin. Don McCullin is an extraordinary war photographer. I'm stunned by his work. He took a photograph in 1968 of a dead North Vietnamese soldier, and while the person was lying dead on the ground, he removed things from his coat – some cigarettes, bullets, a picture of his wife, his child. Maybe he was exhausted. People criticized him. They said, 'You've' – the modern word today is – '"curated" the photograph.' I didn't see it that way. He was pulling out things, maybe for himself, but because he was exhausted, perhaps, maybe to remind himself of his own humanity. But he looked and you no longer saw … As a photographer, the easiest thing to do is photograph dead bodies. And I can get you emotional, but it's meaningless. You don't know anything. You're just emotional and it's useless. But all of a sudden, that North Vietnamese soldier was someone who got stuck in all of this crap.

Now, today I heard a story on the other side of it, and it was lovely. You have a young soldier on the front, in a very bad part of Ukraine, face to face with the Russians, who wanted to be a journalist, who wanted to be a poet and writes poetry. And he loves Ernest Hemingway's writing. He's twenty-one-years-old. So, what could he do? He thought, 'I'm going to name my gun Ernest.' And so he carries around his gun, Ernest, while he's writing poetry in his back pocket. That is an extraordinary story. That's an extraordinary story. And I hope one day I get to meet that young man. I really do.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you. It may be the last question to Jon. I am so eager to know one question. So, you were talking about the necessity to talk to the aggressor. And my question is very short, in a specific area, to you. Because people were talking about the necessity to talk to victims, of victim testimonies, all the atrocities we observe. What question would you ask Mr Putin, if you had such an opportunity?

Jon Lee Anderson: What the hell do you think you're doing? What the hell do you think you're doing? You know, essentially, I could ask him a hundred things, but really, all I would want to know is that. That's all any of us want to know. What the hell does he think he's doing? Does he think he's helping Russia? What does he really think he's going to get out of this. For Russia? For greater Russia? For history? For perpetuity? He's committing a great evil and that's how he will be remembered. Whatever he was originally, he'll be remembered as one of history's great tyrants. And that's all I really want to know from him is that. Essentially, it's: what's the motivation? And that's – when I say I like to talk to … It's not that I like to talk to perpetrators, or by any means dismiss the work of people who look at the victims. I'm absolutely in sync with everything said here. It's essential that the victims' stories come out, that they are revivified, that they're given back their lives, that they not just be faceless millions in mass graves, of course.

But what the hell is in the mind of the person who can send fourteen-year-olds to beat prisoners to death? What the hell is in the minds of a man sitting in the Kremlin Palace who thinks it's somehow OK to throw bombs on a neighbouring country's civilian malls, hospitals, railroad stations, apartment buildings? And I don't know if he'll ever be asked that question. But that's the question that needs to be asked. Yeah.

Janine di Giovanni: You know what I'd like to ask him? What happened to you? What happened to him to make him do this? I mean, I think we all think he's a sociopath or a psychopath or insane. But where, you know – starting with the submarine, the incident of the submarine, when he let those Russian soldiers die… the lack of empathy and compassion! I just want to know at what point – and I've read plenty of biographies of him and analysis of him. But I really would like to, I mean, the first question we are trained as human rights monitors is to ask, one of them, is: 'What happened to you?' To let people tell their own story.

And I just want to know, at what point did he lose all humanity and become a faceless… just a blob of cruelty?

Victoria Amelina: I'd like to remind that he's actually a KGB officer. And, well, even before he was elected, he was a KGB officer. We are talking about KGB, an organization responsible for killing millions of people. And we had Nuremberg for Nazi criminals, but we never had a kind of Nuremberg for the crimes of the KGB and the Soviet regime. So he is from that organization. He carries all that legacy with him. So, well, there must have been a moment that something happened to him in his childhood. But I mean, before becoming Russian president, he was a KGB officer. It's like a Nazi criminal, if you want.

Tetyana Oharkova: So, thank you. We still have some minutes for questions. So please free to ask. Somebody there… we'll give you a microphone so you'll be able to ask a question.

Audience member: Thank you. Very, very brief question. It's a bit vague, so go at it as you wish. Is journalism getting worse – in terms of the quality, the pay, whatever? Interpret as you will. Is it getting worse?

Janine di Giovanni: Jon and I probably have different views on this. I kind of mourn old-fashioned reportage, which I think Michael and I talked about – the, kind of, before 24-hour news. I'm not a television journalist, but I know my TV friends constantly are complaining that they're tied to a satellite dish and they have to give rolling news, which means they can't get out into the field. They can't do in-depth reporting. I believe, and we had this discussion earlier, that it's harder and harder for freelancers. I think wars are expensive now. There's all kinds of things to take into consideration that I never had to think about – like war insurance and getting evacuated in case you get… You know, most journalists get into car crashes at some point. Well, how do you get out, or if you're shot? My ex-husband was shot by a sniper in Libya and then had a heart attack in Iraq. He happened to be French. And the French government helps people get out. But all these things. And then the other thing, which isn't happening here, thank God, is kidnapping. But the ISIS war, which I reported in Iraq and Syria, my colleagues, two of my colleagues and dear friends, were kidnapped

and beheaded by ISIS. So I do think journalism is tougher. It's harder for people like you, Jen, freelancers that really want to tell the story. And I just think, you know, just keep going. But it is definitely more difficult. I'm being quick because I know Jon Lee has a different view of it.

Jon Lee Anderson: I don't know, I mean, it's always been difficult. I talked about the massacre I ran across as a nothing-nobody freelancer in my twenties in Uganda. Nobody, nobody was interested. I paid my way myself, you know. I don't know. It was hard then, it's hard now. You know, in some ways, I think journalists have it easier. You know, you can in theory, have your own publication by having a smartphone. I know that there's a lot more to it than that. You can go around and blog and if you're lucky, acquire an audience. Twenty, thirty years ago, unless you had a publication that would publish you, nobody knew of you, ever. That was it. So in some ways, it's easier. In some ways it's harder. I don't know. It's always been difficult to be a freelancer. When I was in Libya, there was a bunch of kids that came in who'd never reported a war before. They came into Libya because they were visiting their girlfriend who was studying Arabic in Cairo. One was there because she was doing yoga classes. And they arrived on the front line in Benghazi and they were brave youngsters who wanted to experience history and document it, and they all had these things *[picks up his smartphone].* I couldn't fault them for being there. That's what young people do. And most of us who are older recognize that – we put them in our cars, we were on expenses, they ganged-up and slept in cheap hotel rooms with each other. But, you know, we looked after them. We tried to tell them how to stay out of danger. A few got shot. It's always been difficult. It's never been easy. And it's not for everybody…

Janine di Giovanni: One became Nicole Tung. Nicole Tung was one of those young kids who we put in our cars and helped. And she's not probably the greatest foreign photographer. She's working for the *New York Times.* Many of you know her work. But that's how she started – she showed up there with a camera and a few hundred dollars in her back pocket and no plan. And she's now, you know, probably the premier photographer for the *New York Times* in Ukraine, doing amazing work.

Tetyana Oharkova: Thank you. We have two minutes left – maybe one short question. *[Audience member asks a question in Ukrainian and Tetyana translates]* So the question is about the context: in which way and how is the sociological context and historical context important when you work in the conflict?

Audience member: Because most of the Russian invasions and the Russian war conflicts are, like, probably the historical problem from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. So the question is: do you count it when you work with this information and work with these kinds of…?

Jon Lee Anderson: I would just quickly say that, I mean, history is always important. And in any conflict you cover. And if you if you go to a conflict without any notion of what's happened there before, you're going to be headed to trouble, for trouble. You need to have context. You need to have some intellectual curiosity and try to do some due diligence with the history and the and the nature of the society. If you're an outsider [and] you're going to document, of course. So, yeah, historical context is, of course, everything.

Janine di Giovanni: Also, in terms of Ukraine, what we're looking at very closely is transgenerational trauma, because Ukraine – not just the Holodomor, but World War I, World War II, the constant invasions, the constant fighting which are transgenerational. So we're looking – Peter Pomerantsev, Nataliya and myself – are looking really carefully at that. In places like Kharkiv, you know, where trauma is so pronounced and the region and so… History is always vital. Absolutely.

Michael Katakis: Yes. History, you have to – I agree with Jon, I agree with Janine. You have to be prepared, but not saddled with the history. But you must know it. You must know it. You must have knowledge about where you're going, whether that's as a war correspondent, or a traveller themselves, I would argue. But it's terribly important. Terribly important. As a matter of fact, it's the next most important – or equal to – being able to speak some of the language.

Tetyana Oharkova: Unfortunately, we don't have time for any other questions. So I would like to thank everybody for this extremely interesting discussion, extremely interesting.

Abdulrazak Gurnah in Conversation with Alim Aliev

Alim Aliev: Good evening to our dear participants. Welcome to the final meeting of the 29th BookForum in Lviv. My name is Alim Aliev, I am the Deputy General Director of the Ukrainian Institute and a member of the Ukrainian PEN. And today it is my great pleasure to have a talk with Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian-born British novelist, winner of many awards, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and a Laureate of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature, for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fates of refugees in the gulf between cultures and continents. Welcome to this talk, Abdulrazak.

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Thank you. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be with you.

Alim Aliev: I would like to start our conversation with my childhood memories. I spent my childhood in the post-Soviet Crimea. I cannot call Crimea 'Ukrainian' in the 1990s, as it was officially Ukrainian, but de facto it was post-Soviet. When the whole society was trying to survive economically, when the whole society was trying to find its place under the sun and the question of identity, the question of who I am and what I am, was not even asked. And this was also the time when the Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people of Ukraine, returned to their homeland in the Crimea after deportation. I remember that I was in primary school, and once I was coming back home and heard from a neighbour, who was a Russian woman brought to the Crimea after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, the word 'tatarchonok' ['Tatar kid']. This was her mocking name for me, conveying features, negative features of my nationality. And the first question I wanted to ask you in this context, when did you first feel your otherness with such a colonial connotation?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Yeah, well, I'm very glad to meet you, Alim, and to hear that experience, that encounter. I have no experience of Ukraine or of Russia or the

Soviet Union in any kind of personal way. I've never been there. But of course, I have read about the population transfer policies of the Stalinist Soviet Union, in particular the fate that befell the Crimean Tatar people. So it's very, very moving and interesting to me to hear a personal experience of that. That way in which people who have displaced people, other people, from their ancestral homes, and then they assume that the original people – if by chance they come back, or if by chance they still remain there – that they are the ones who are either strangers or, indeed, intruders or, in any case, a nuisance, and so can address them in that kind of demeaning way, that sort of dismissive way. What is different, of course, about your experience is that you are returning; or your family and you, as a child, were returning to what was your home. And you're still mocked for it.

My experience of going, say, to the United Kingdom was completely different, I wasn't going to, in any way at all, a place that I thought of as home. I was going there for my own reasons. I was going there to get an education, to improve my life, that sort of thing. So in a way, you know, whatever unwelcomingness that I might have met, even though I was too young to be wise about it, but on reflection, whatever unwelcomingness I might have met, well, that's how strangers are treated wherever they go.

So there is a difference between being kind of demeaned in your own home, or at least what was your ancestral home, and the kind of troubles people have to cope with when they relocate, when they go to find something better somewhere else. Especially as in the case of people like us, people like me, coming from Africa, coming to Europe. There is all sort of other barriers, of history, of colonization, and also a history of generally seeing people from our part of the world as inferior. There are differences, but no doubt there are also some overlaps between your experience and the experiences that I and many people, millions of people, have had in their movements around the world. It's even – it's rather horrible that you return to what was your home and somebody who has displaced you says something mocking.

Alim Aliev: Thank you, Abdulrazak. You once said that you are not an island and that millions of people later share your experience in one way or another – some aspects of your experience, whether it is about being a foreigner in another country, or being a Muslim, or just being a person over seventy. And I have a question: when did you realize that it is important to talk about yourself, and share your experience with other people and to talk about your own experience yourself, and not to hear about your own experience described by others?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: *[laughing]* Now, a long time before I was seventy, I could tell you that. I mean, I think the desire to speak about the things that I had been through myself, both the leaving, leaving your country, leaving your home for complicated and difficult reasons, political reasons, reasons of the terror of the state. These are not, these are not unique to me. This is an experience shared by millions of people. Straightforward. All over the world it has been kind of more or less in human history; people have to leave because other people are trying to hurt them or upset them or deny them their rights or whatever. So that part of the experience was not new, I think. What was new, I think, was the experience of people leaving the colonized, formerly colonized territories to come to Europe. The migration move is, generally speaking, at least so far is, kind of, across the oceans, anyway. I know that Central Asia and Europe, Central Europe – that's a different historical experience. But for people coming from our part of the world, from Asia, from our part of Africa and elsewhere, this is a new thing, this experience of people in large numbers travelling to Europe, say, or travelling to North America. Generally, in the previous centuries it had been in the other way. So that was something that I knew was new, was at least not written about, not known about. And it had its own pain, which it was necessary to write about. So, both the leaving places like that and arriving in places like Europe, all of these were really experiences shared by millions of other people, and continue to be so. Of course there is – they're evolving. So the experiences are new for people who are now in their youth, who are doing absolutely incredibly dangerous things: crossing the Mediterranean, crossing the Channel, the English Channel. I didn't have to do that kind of dangerous things to get to England, nor did many of the people in that era that we're talking about. But now, I suppose that movement of people has both increased, but it also has become one that is resisted more firmly by various European countries. And so the people who do it have to take more risks or to risk their lives. In some cases, because they're escaping war, in some cases, they simply want a better life. But all of these, it seems to me, are valid human reasons, for wanting to move to make a better life for yourself.

Alim Aliev: Today, Ukraine is in the midst of war. And now, while we are having this conversation, we are in Lviv, in a bomb shelter, because now there is an

air alarm in Ukraine, almost all over Ukraine. This means that at any moment there can be a missile strike in any part of our country. And just this morning thirteen people died in the city of Zaporizhzhia that was hit with these Russian missiles. And they killed civilians. Russia attempts to deny the existence of Ukraine. And we can see this in very different aspects of what is happening – it is also a denial of identity, because the way cultural heritage is destroyed, the way culture is appropriated is one issue, but it is also physical destruction, when thousands and thousands of our compatriots are killed in this war. I'd like to ask you: how would you characterize this war for yourself, and for the world, from your perspective?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Well, I don't know about the world, of course, I can only speak about what I know. When this war started, when this invasion started, now several months ago, it seemed, at first incomprehensible. It seemed both outrageous and evil. And incomprehensible. Just a sheer act of bullying and overpowering a smaller neighbour. But really what, I suppose, I didn't expect, and I'm sure many people in the world didn't expect – I don't know if Ukrainians expected – is the sheer obstinate endurance of your resistance to this act of aggression. And it's completely admirable. It's absolutely brilliant. I know it's, sort of, it is inevitable, of course, people will – fighting for their freedom, people will lose their lives, there will be danger, there will be damage, there will be whatever. But I just think you've been absolutely fantastic in, you know, not allowing this bully tactic to diminish you, to oppress you. And to continue, I believe, if I understand it right – I'm an outsider, so I don't know if I understand everything fully – but if I understand right, something remains that says that in all our differences, we are all Ukrainians. So, you're telling me you're a Crimean Tatar; other people I've heard speaking, they say that they're Russians, but they're Ukrainians. And I think this is just such a wonderful thing. So from where I stand, I think, you know, if it works – which I hope it will, of course, for you. If it works and your resistance endures and succeeds, and you seem really determined as a nation – it will be an example to many other people. When the big neighbour steps in and says, 'I'm going to teach you a lesson' and so on.

What I don't understand is what's in the mind of... What it is that the Russian establishment states – maybe we should just say what Mr Putin – has in mind. This is what is kind of really impossible to understand. Does he think you can just sort of recreate a medieval Russian Empire, or something like that? Maybe you can tell me, Alim, can you explain to me what do you think is in his mind?

Alim Aliev: I might, perhaps, describe a little bit about the way of thinking of Russia and Russian society, again taking Crimea as an example. The war in Ukraine began with the Crimea, with the occupation of the Crimea in February 2014. Actually, it started with a re-colonization of the peninsula, and by colonization, I mean several important aspects. The first aspect is militarization, and this militarization is not only about militarization in the military sense. The fact is that today Crimea has turned from a tourist resort into a military base. As of today, 800 rockets have been fired from that place over the past seven months – from the peninsula to the other territories of Ukraine. But it is also about the militarization of consciousness. Starting from kindergartens, schools, and universities, children are constantly told and taught that there are enemies all around; that Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, pro-Ukrainian residents of the Crimea, or Ukrainians from other regions are enemies, nationalists, et cetera. And on the other hand, they say that Russia, with its great past, the past with an imperial, neo-imperial future is actually the only way and choice for these children.

Another important aspect is the change of identity. The Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people, during these years in Crimea the representative body of the Crimean Tatars – the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people – was actually banned, and today hundreds of common people, human rights activists, journalists are behind the bars, because they dared to express an alternative point of view and conduct different activities, including human rights related ones, on the peninsula. And there is no independent media left in Crimea either. But another aspect that speaks of colonization is population transfer. And population transfer takes place in a very, I would say, Russian manner. Those who do not agree with Russia's policy are forced out of the peninsula, and today more than 50,000 residents of the Crimea have left the peninsula. And this was a brain drain, but at least half a million new people were brought in to Crimea. And all this clearly indicates that Russia is trying to make the Crimea a part of Russian territory with Russian people who follow a Russian way of thinking.

But if you look at the history of Crimea, the last four centuries are four centuries about the desire for colonization. In the eighteenth century, Catherine II annexed Crimea. And before that annexation 95 per cent of the entire population of the peninsula was Crimean Tatars. Nowadays this percentage has dropped to 13 per cent. Both the Crimean Tatars and the Ukrainian state now face the first challenge – how to preserve their identity under occupation and in captivity. Maybe you have some recipes for that?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: No, no. I don't. That's very interesting. No, of course I don't have advice. This is a long-term aggression over centuries that you describe. And it is, of course, not just the Crimean Tatars who have been put through these processes or been overtaken and somehow digested and made part of some ideal empire. I guess, you know, it's also true of the Ukraine as a whole; it's also true of Belarus and perhaps Polish parts as well, and also Central Asia, Chechen, Dagestan. That's how empires … And you know, the difference between the empires – the continental empires like Russia and ultimately, later on, the Soviet Union, China, India, is that they colonize the adjacent territories. Everybody next door becomes part of whatever. And our experience of colonialism has been a colonialism from across the seas. That comes from thousands of miles away with people who look completely different, speak different languages, a different religion, I know that's true also for Crimea, but they come from a long way away, with a whole different way of thinking about life. The whole idea of what they think they will find when they get there, and what they understand about how people live over there. The disruption they caused, the transformation they caused, of course, cannot be reversed. In the same way as what you are talking about cannot be reversed. You can't get these things back. You can't rewind them. Unfortunately, in some cases. You can't rewind them, we have to move on, we have to move forward.

When you have such a big, big neighbour with such huge ambitions, and those ambitions are really about the diminishing of you, then I think it's going to be a pretty long struggle. But I'm sure you and your countrymen and countrywomen will be up for it. You'll be there to resist this. But yeah, you know, there's no way of not understanding that the point behind all of this is the creation, or the recreation, of a Russian Empire, which includes all these 'non-real nations'. Isn't that what Putin said, that there is no such thing as a Ukrainian nation? Is that right? That is what he said, isn't it? That there is no Ukrainian nation. And this is the way in which empires refuse to allow anybody else to exist, except as their, somehow, their vassal, their possession. But you're doing fine, you're doing all right. Well, you're not doing fine, but you're doing your best, and that's the best you can do.

Alim Aliev: The next question I had has to do with the perception of contemporary Russia among the African countries, because for a long time the Soviet Union and Russia were perceived as anti-imperialist states, in contrast to European countries or the United States. And obviously there were reasons for that. But with this new war – although the 'new' war has been going on for

nine years, it isn't so new anymore… But in your opinion, how has the perception of Russia has changed in these countries? To what extent is Russia still today treated as an anti-imperialist power? Or is there a sense that Russia is just an imperialist state that is attempting to colonize and enslave other nations and peoples?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Yeah, well, there's a long history. There's a long history in this. When I say long, I don't mean, you know, decades long. Well, maybe decades long, but not much longer than that. So during the period of decolonization, the 1960s in particular, when the British and the French were being completely obstinate, and in many cases using violence to prevent these decolonization movements from making any progress. There were wars going on in places like Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Algeria, Madagascar, God knows. And so the European powers, who were then the colonial powers, were not – even though they like to forget that now – were not saying, 'All right, all right, we'll talk. We'll talk.' No, they were resisting. They were resisting and they were fighting. During that period, what was then the Soviet bloc in one form or another, not only just the Soviet Union, but other places as well, provided a great deal of support for those movements. That support extended from – China as well… extended from various ways of, you know, assisting them with the propaganda, with the newsletters, newspapers, with military training, this and that and that and that. So there was a period there when it did seem as if, on the one hand, you have a kind of bloc of European, Western-European, including the Americans, who thought the decolonization movement was a mistake. On the other hand, you have this support. So that was greatly appreciated. But on the other hand, it also followed that in the years after this, many countries saw that the result of this was as manipulative, in some cases very manipulative. If you think of the way, let's say, the wars in Ethiopia and Somalia happened, if you think of the way in which interference in other countries resulted in, you know, further conflicts and so on. I mean, of course, most of all if you think of Afghanistan and the Russian intervention there and what it did, or rather the Soviet intervention and what it did. So there is a way, completely, in which people have understood that Soviet intervention, while it looked so good to us and was on our side, was also self-serving in its own way.

Of course, if you speak only to leaders, if you speak only to presidents of this or commanders of that, you'll get a view that says – because they're diplomats and they're politicians, they will only speak in one way because they don't want to lose whatever support it is that they might get, whether it's financial or

whether it's military or whatever. The Americans are not exactly great friendly uncles to everybody. They tend to invade other people's countries, they tend to pursue their own agendas. They create havoc wherever they go. So, it's not as if they're kind of angels or something like that. I know they're helping Ukraine, so they look like angels. But if they don't like you, then they're monstrous. As are the British. So, in a way, you might say, well, are they really that different? If they are on your side, it might seem like they are different. But if they are not, I mean, unfortunately, they have got their sights on you – the Russians. But the Americans had their sights on Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, created their havoc and then they just left, and left them. And left them, abandoned them. I don't know if that's any better, really. Because they destroyed those countries for their own ends, immediately, and then they went away, went home.

So if there is any kind of ambivalence, it's not because people are not sympathetic to suffering, I don't think. I'm not talking about presidents and prime ministers, but people you might speak to. It's not that they are not sympathetic to the suffering that ordinary people, ordinary, small, smallish, Ukraine is not a small state. It's a very advanced state, but it's smaller of course than its neighbour. It's not that they're not sympathetic to the dangers that they have to face in order to survive and so on. But yes, but other states also have to face this danger. So there is sympathy, people do understand, I think, even if they can't speak it loudly enough to be heard.

It would, I think, also be useful for people to understand what is different about the Ukrainian experience. You know, it needs for – I gather just recently that the Foreign Minister of the Ukrainian state has been visiting various African countries and explaining the situation in Ukraine. I think this is important, too, because not everybody understands the relationship in Ukraine to Russia. Or the relationship of what was the former Soviet Union to its current states, the Russian Federation. Not everybody understands that. So it's quite helpful, I think, for that to be understood. And indeed the history, the history of aggression that Russia has in its imperial designs towards its neighbours. It's not something people outside of those who participate in this experience, including in Europe, actually, certainly in the UK – I don't think they fully understand the long history of that constant expansion of Russia into Europe and into Asia.

Alim Aliev: Yes, it's absolutely true that for a long time Ukraine has been seen through the prism of Russian narratives. And Ukrainian foreign policy as it exists today… we've been trying to achieve such a level of foreign politics for a long

Top: Abdulrazak Gurnah
Bottom: Alim Aliev

time, since we regained our independence in 1991, when we are trying to get back our names, when we are talking about ourselves. But, obviously, propaganda and disinformation do exist, and we see that in the battle of narratives, unfortunately, it loses. And sometimes I'm really concerned—

Abdulrazak Gurnah: I don't know. I don't know if it loses. It's just that this is one of those things, that when there are loud voices, you have to keep, you have to keep speaking. It doesn't lose. You don't lose. It means you have to sustain that contesting voice. And you're doing fine in that respect, I would have thought. You're hearing each other. And we are hearing you. So in a way you have to sustain that, you know, the loud voice sounds… sounds blaring, sounds false, sounds untrue. You should read, if you can, you should read the newspapers in the rest of the world – they can see through the narrative, as it were, of Russia, of Putin. They can see through that. So it's not to say that it cannot be heard, it is being heard. But what I'm saying is that I think it needs to continue. It needs to continue, and it needs to continue in a way that says… not simply as aggrieved, as whatever, but to explain the difference between – 'We're not Russian. Or if we are, we're not Russian in the way that Putin wants us to be Russian.' This is, I think, important as a way of wanting to, you know, I suppose, to say, This is our story, this is our narrative.' Rather than, 'Our narrative is kind of overwhelmed by the other one.' I think you have to do this. This is what, this is what people like me have been trying to do.

Alim Aliev: It is absolutely worth continuing this, and the fact is that nowadays I see how Ukraine explains itself and opens up to the rest of the world. And modern Ukraine, the way it exists today – very different, multicultural, obviously with its own challenges, but also with the fact that Ukraine can contribute to the development of this world.

But sometimes I am worried about the efforts of our partners, colleagues – and this is currently a big discussion among Ukrainian intellectuals – about an attempt to put Russians and Ukrainians at the same table so that we start talking. In my opinion, such a conversation is impossible today, when there is not just a full-scale war, but when some cities witness an absolute genocide of the Ukrainian people. In my opinion, such a discussion with the Russians is possible only after the last Russian soldier leaves the territory of Ukraine, including the occupied territories, and when we also start talking about reparations. And I'm interested, what do you think about the efforts to initiate such conversations? When can and should they be appropriate?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Really, I think that's up to you. I don't think I can say, 'This is the time.' I don't have a full understanding of what has been done and how awful it is. I suppose in the long run I think it's probably not possible to resolve everything clean, let's say, cut and dried. 'You go, and then we'll talk.' I don't know. But maybe sometimes things happen that are so horrific that you can't bear to speak to the people who've carried out these activities. But in the long run, I think it's just probably unavoidable that sooner or later you're going to have to sit down and talk. Maybe when they lose enough or when you win enough or something or the other. But I don't think you can actually, kind of, destroy your antagonist, really. You just can't. You're just going to keep fighting forever. So there has to be a point of conversation at some moment. And you'll know and decide where or what that moment is. Excuse me. It's getting very dark in my room. Do you mind if I just open the window? Excuse me. *[Abdulrazak Gurnah leaves for a moment and returns]*

Alim Aliev: It's much better.

Abdulrazak Gurnah: It's better, yeah. It's just, you know, it's getting towards evening. So the light, it was getting dark. Anyway, so really, that's my feeling that, you know, you can't not talk at some point. When is the right moment to do so? Well, you will decide for yourselves when that is so.

Alim Aliev: Thank you, it seems to me that this is a very honest and, in my opinion, a very nice answer, because this dialogue is really only possible when Ukrainian society makes this decision. It seems to me that now it is quite difficult, even impossible to initiate a dialogue between the victim and the executioner.

Another question I have for you is about history. If you look at the history of Ukraine in the twentieth century and its modern history, it is soaked in blood. Ukraine has gone through famines, genocides, repressions – repressions both on the part of the Soviet Union and on the part of Nazi Germany. And now we have another war and other repressions on the part of Russia. And there is obviously a great temptation to victimize ourselves, because, of course, when we live through all this, of course, we also walk the path of a victim. But how should we structure ourselves, our activities and our lives so that we do not become paternalistic, so that we do not victimize ourselves deeper than it is necessary, because victimization is also about negative perception.

And unfortunately, it takes away our weight. And this is how the world starts seeing us.

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Yeah, well, you've had a very complicated time. As you say, because of the famines in the '30's and then the Nazi invasion and subsequent persecution. It's difficult to know. I mean, this is not the right time really, possibly, to examine certain historical grievances and wrongs. Because this is a moment about survival. This is a moment about just getting through. And so, in some ways, it might be a moment when you want to just subdue those sorts of inquiries into what happened and who did what; who did the right, and who did the wrong. Until we get – until you get through to a space where you can say, 'OK, now that we're through that one now, let's look again at ourselves and say…'

It's always important to know, it seems to me. Always, always, always better to know than not to know. So I started by saying it's a complicated history. It's a complicated history because so many of these events were done by Ukrainians. So many of those participants in the persecution were themselves Ukrainians against other Ukrainians. And there are people who are performing quite horrible acts against other people, Ukrainian Tatars, Jewish people or other people who are perhaps, you know, Polish – or whatever it might be. The idea of making, then, a Ukrainian nation, which appears to be something you'll be able to do, it's something quite remarkable it if works, and it looks like it's working. Because it's saying that we have overcome those differences, we have understood our differences. But maybe this is not the right time to go into the details. Maybe now is the time to survive. But it will be necessary at some point to go into those details and to understand things. So that things can be done, so injustices can be put right, so that you're talking about reparations against Russia, but it could be that these are also things that have to be within the nation itself, where wrongs have been done, where people have been dispossessed, where people have been mistreated.

This is true not only of the Ukraine. This is true of many nations. And I think, in these modern times, when we are talking about things like human rights in a different way… I know that one of the people you've had as your guest has been Philippe Sands, who has written about these things; I think his ancestors came from Lviv. And he's written about these things and he understands these things. That's the process. That process of understanding injustices done in the past. And in due course, in times when we can do so, we revisit those and say, 'How can we bring justice to those who have been dismissed?' Right now, you have to survive. So this is my answer really.

Alim Aliev: True. We are living in times of massive challenges. However, I see Ukrainian society changing. If, even if you compare it to, let's say, to the society of 2013, before the Revolution of Dignity and the society of now 2022. The huge engagement of civil society, the creation of new democratic institutions, this very vibrant and proactive process of decolonization, starting with cultural decolonization, historical decolonization, and this process of understanding the vector, the direction, that your country wants to move along in. And of course, we have got this adrenaline rush right now that's pumping through us, because obviously society has turned into this kind of massive horizontal network of either the military or volunteers or those who support the Army and those who do whatever is in their power to bring victory closer. Because every day without victory on the battlefield, our compatriots die in peaceful – conditionally peaceful – civilian cities. But I'm sure that we'll go through this process, that' we'll do so with dignity and we will emerge victorious. But it's also important to me that no society, including our own decolonized society, would ever, in the future, turn into a colonizer. And so my question to you is, from your perspective, how can one prevent this?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Well, prayer. I don't know, because there is something rotten in the way human desire for power works. There is something which is irresistible. The only way we can – well, not the only way, but one of the ways in which we can do that is through that kind of knowledge and experience. That awareness of who is likely to be hurting us, who's likely to be wanting to oppress us and to take us over. And the only way we can do this is by constantly being watchful, by constantly warning each other of the dangers of such things. But I don't know that we can actually kind of extinguish this desire. When you have powerful arms, powerful armed forces, when you have lots of money and somebody irritates you, somebody you don't like does something, you think, 'OK, I'm going to put that right.' This is the way in which power works. I don't know how we can prevent that.

Except, you look at the example right now… I don't know if it will work out, but you look at the example right now of these schoolgirls in Iran who are somehow creating havoc within this – what to outsiders would appear to be – all-powerful authoritarian state apparatus. But it does seem – whether it will last or not… but it does seem as if these girls, the schoolgirls or these young women, somehow have lost their fear and are saying aggressive things that I'm sure

are shared by large parts of the population, who are themselves obviously too careful and too afraid as well. This is what happens, now and then, something like that bursts out and we think, 'Yes, there is a will to resistance.' It's that kind of thing that we have to nurture, because that's the only way in which you can prevent the bullies and the monsters from having their own way every time. So if nothing else, let's hope and pray that these girls are safe, and that indeed they do – that their voices find an echo of the rest of the population so that they can say to these angry clergy, 'Stop bulling us.'

Alim Aliev: I would like once again, perhaps to try to appeal to your experience, I suppose, and your experience of migration. Today, millions of Ukrainians, men and women, have found themselves outside of Ukraine, abroad, because of this war, because of this occupation, because of… And one of the challenges they face is to preserve their identity in spite of everything. In some countries it's possible, because there's the infrastructure in place: there are schools, there are kindergartens, there are cultural centres. But in some environments, it's much more complicated. What important things should a person who has emigrated remember in order to – after the war – return to Ukraine and to preserve their sense self and their identity during this time in emigration?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Yeah, well, you've got to believe. People don't lose themselves. This idea that if you're away from your home for a couple of years, somehow you are adrift. It's not true. You're not adrift at all. You don't lose anything. You don't lose your language, you don't lose your connection, you don't lose your memories. You see, fortunately or unfortunately, what is in our minds of what we know and what we remember never, ever goes away. It's never, ever over. You could live to your seventies, but you will still remember your home. You will still speak the language. And unless you are forcibly required to change, and I don't see how that would happen any more in most civil societies, then I don't think that's the issue.

The bigger problem for people moving from their country to another place, say Ukrainians moving to the UK, and so on, are the usual things about being a stranger: how to find work, how to live, how to raise your family. So it's the family that might be the people you're talking about, rather than the individual who's Ukrainian. It could be as they raise families elsewhere, that those young people, as they're growing up, those children and so on, might choose differently. Might say, 'Actually, no, I think I prefer Minnesota to Ukraine, and I'm OK with

that,' or something like that. But then this is also part of how life and how human society moves and evolves. The grandchildren of those same people might say, 'No, no, I'm not Minnesotan, I'm Ukrainian. I want to go and visit my grandparents out there.' That's how it goes. I don't think we need to be tragic about this.

I do think, quite honestly, for individuals like me, say, although I have lived for fifty years or so in the UK, I think, and in my mind I visit Zanzibar almost every day. And when I'm not visiting actually physically, I'm visiting it in my imagination and when I get the opportunity, I visit it. And I get emails and messages and whatever. I'm absolutely unable to say, even if I wanted to, that I've lost Zanzibar. Because Zanzibar won't allow me to. And I'm sure this is also true, or will always be true of people as they're away from their countries. They don't lose it. You don't lose it – it's in here *[gesturing towards his head]*. It's in your head, it's in your imagination. You cannot do it. Maybe if you leave your country when you're two years old. But if you leave your country after the age of fifteen or sixteen, I think you're doomed, you're stuck with it. So I don't think you need to worry about that idea, at least in my view, you asked on my view. My view is that I don't think you lose things like that. I think those things are yours forever.

Alim Aliev: Absolutely. I hope that obviously some, most of them will return after there is peace and victory in Ukraine. But actually, after that, how do you think this war will affect the global future of the world?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: I don't know, because I don't know whether you can say that a particular – or a war has this impact on the world. You think a few years ago you would have said that the Afghanistan experience would have transformed ways of thinking. But with each passing month and year it recedes, and another tragedy is in front of us. Of course, it will make a big difference to how Europe thinks about itself, because I don't think Europe has had an experience like this for a long time. Of course, it had Bosnia and Serbia and all that some time, twenty years, ago. But in recent times. So it will, I think, affect… I'm quite sure it will certainly make us think differently about Russia. And perhaps about Ukraine. Because suddenly we are aware, now, of Ukraine as an entity which wants to insist on its difference, rather than simply being some kind of appendage to a Russian entity, some kind of variation on a broken-down Soviet Union. So now we have a greater sense of the Ukrainian desire for its own authenticity. But, you know, there are all these other places in turmoil. I don't know whether this will be a transformation of the world. I think it's a transformation of Europe. I do

wish you all the best, though. I do wish that, you know, you will succeed in your resistance, in your endeavour. And maybe ask me again next year, how has this transformed the world? And I'll see if I have a better answer than that.

Alim Aliev: Well, now I am not at home in Crimea, but this feeling of home is very important to me. Because the feeling of home is what makes you happy and fulfilled, that's why I have my rituals, my physical manifestations, my things that connect me to my home. And you don't find yourself in your own home, either. But what gives you this feeling of your own home? This feeling of happiness from understanding that, after all, your heart belongs to this place, or this country or this environment?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Well, my home… So home is complicated, you see. Home is not just simply where you live, nor is it simply where you came from. But it is both of those things. So really, I have my home here, because here is where I found work, and I've worked very contentedly and in a fulfilled way here in Canterbury, teaching at the university. I brought my family up here, my children and now my grandchildren or whatever. So in a way, that is home. This is unquestionably home. Well, certainly for my children and grandchildren. But my home is also where I came from. And so I'm lucky in that I'm contented in both. I'm contented in thinking this is home in a different way. If you were to shake me awake at three in the morning and say, 'Where's your home?' I'd say: 'Zanzibar.' But on the other hand, if you were to say to me at three o'clock in the afternoon that: 'This is not your home'. I'd say: 'No, you're wrong. This is my home.' So I have both. I think it's good.

Alim Aliev: Absolutely. This is the strange sense when you have a physical, sort of – the place where you are is your home, and the place where you long to go is also your home. Perhaps the last question I have is about the writers who live in occupied territories. under occupation, in spaces deprived of liberty. Today, I note a trend, for instance, that some of the writers who live in Crimea, Crimean Tatar writers, they write in Aesopian language about the events taking place on the peninsula. They try to record it, but they do it under pseudonyms, under various hidden accounts on social media. And on the other hand, we have a new genre, another genre in literature arises. It's not new, but for this period of our life it is new – it's the literature of political prisoners. Because we have, as I said at the beginning, a lot of proactive people – journalists and also writers – who are behind bars. And they're writing about their experience; about what they feel and what they see around them. What, in your opinion, should be recorded by writers who are currently either in occupied territories, or in the midst of war?

Abdulrazak Gurnah: There are different forms out there. There are different forms of writing, and they're all important and all worth pursuing. So there are forms of writing that are kind of testimonies of oppression, and they are really important. They have a kind of immediacy and a, kind of, I suppose – they require action. But not all writing has to be like that, even in occupied circumstances. I'm sure you can think of as many examples as I can of people who were in oppressed circumstances, but who actually don't write about their immediate experience, but who somehow transform it into something else. It doesn't mean it isn't about that experience. It means it's about that experience in a more mediated way. All of these are quite appropriate. You do your best. Everybody does their best.

If, as a result of certain experiences, you want to write from the heart about the ugliness of what you have endured and make a testimony of it, that is something worthwhile. But it may you don't want to do that, and you don't want to occupy a platform, and you want to write about that experience in a different way. In a way that perhaps foregrounds the kind of tenderness that you understood and felt was missing. I think all of these are appropriate. I don't want to dictate to anybody. I want to say, 'Let's be witnesses in whichever way that we know how to do it. In whichever way we are moved to do it.'

Alim Aliev: Dear Abdulrazak, I am very grateful for our conversation today as part of the BookForum in Lviv. And as the Crimean Tatars say nowadays, whether it will be at a public or private event next year, we should meet in the free Crimea, and I really hope that next year we will have an offline, real-life conversation with you in free Ukraine and in the free Crimea. Thank you.

Abdulrazak Gurnah: Thank you very much, I would love to visit the Crimea. Thank you.