

Ukrainian non-fiction

# Battle for Kyiv

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This is the new book by Ukrainian journalist Serhii Rudenko, author of "Zelenskyiy Without Make-Up: A Political Biography" sold in 2022 in 25 languages.

In February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine: the taking of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, was a declared main goal of the "special operation". Both the seat of government and the base of President Zelenskyy, Putin's number one enemy, are in Kyiv. Whoever controls Kyiv controls Ukraine. The unexpectedly successful defense of the capital and the expulsion of the Russian occupiers from the surrounding settlements in the greater Kyiv area was a crucial turning point in the course of the war.

Chapter by chapter, battle round by round, the author Serhii Rudenko recounts the decisive moments in the defense of Kyiv and the surrounding area. Rudenko himself was in Kyiv when the war broke out, and he witnessed the first rockets hitting the Ukrainian capital. His book is following the individual fates of 12 people, many of whom he knew personally before the war, illustrating how brutally this war changes lives. In brief flashbacks, Rudenko shows these people in their earlier life with all their plans and hopes, and then their fate during the struggle for Kyiv. Its hot first phase is described here from a wide variety of perspectives and eye witnesses. And tragically for many of these people, whose voices that appear in the book have since been silenced by the war.

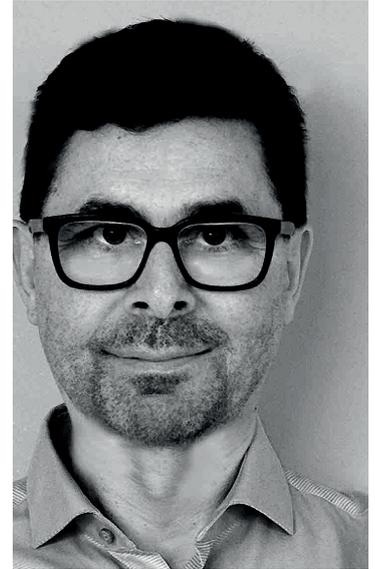
Of course also the Klitschko brothers, whom the author met for the first time thirty years ago, are among these witnesses in the book. And it turns out that the first round of the Klichkos' personal struggle against Putin took place well before 2022. The two world-famous boxers, who could have made themselves comfortable anywhere in the world after their careers, put themselves at the service of the fight for freedom regardless of the risk to their own lives and thus also personally became symbolic figures for the determination of Ukrainian citizens to defend their country.

This incredible spirit of resistance, which neither Putin's generals nor the Western world had counted on, made it clear that the war in Ukraine and the battle for Kyiv is also a battle for freedom and self-determination in Europe. Only with the liberation of the villages around Kyiv and the gruesome discoveries of Bucha and Irpin would the Western world finally realize that this is also a battle to defend human dignity.

## The 12 „heroes“

a photo reporter who died near Kyiv, a politician and a poet who were under occupation near Kyiv, a journalist who spent 10 days under occupation in Bucha, an actor and film director, a major who fought for Gostomel airport, a female lieutenant who burned Russian tanks, a public activist who died, a fighter of the territorial defense who died in Kharkiv Oblast, a Major General who headed the defense of Kiev airport, an editor-in-chief, a pop singer.

Sergii Rudenko was born 1970 in the Sumi region in Ukraine. He is a publicist and television journalist, author of a weekly author column for Deutsche Welle and editor-in-chief of „Espresso.TV“. He worked for the Ukrainian service of Radio Svoboda, was the editor-in-chief of the editions „Now“, „Gazeta 24“, „Glavred“. He is founder of the book portal „Bukvoid“. He became famous by his quite critical political biography about President Zelenskyi translated into more than 25 languages.



## THE AUTHOR

**other translations**  
25 languages

**sample translation**  
English

**other titles**  
Zelenskyi without make-up  
Putin. Anatomy of Hate

# Sergii Rudenko

# Synopsis

## **Klitschko brothers vs Putin. Foreword**

The story of the confrontation between Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko and Vladimir Putin. Three rounds of this struggle - the Orange Revolution, the Revolution of Dignity and the big war of Russia against Ukraine. In each of them, the brothers played a significant role.

In February-March 2022, they became the face of the resistance of the Ukrainian people against the Russian army, which was trying to storm Kyiv. Olympic champions, together with hundreds of thousands of people who took up arms, defended the Ukrainian capital.

## **Warm-up before the fight. A week before the war. February 16**

Six months before a full-scale war, Western intelligence reports about Russia's intentions to attack Ukraine. Most Ukrainians perceive all warnings with distrust. Including the fact that the attack is possible on February 16th.

At this time, the Klitschko brothers go to the recruiting center for reservists. The younger brother Vladimir is enrolled in the territorial defense. The elder is preparing the capital for war.

## **Round one. Impact on the country. Attack on the capital. February 24**

The beginning of a big war in Ukraine. The first strikes on the capital. The author of the book is a witness to the Russian attack on Kyiv. He talks about the first hours of the attack by Putin's army and the reaction to it in the Ukrainian capital.

The first dead, the first destruction, the first decisions of President Zelensky and the mayor of the capital, Vitali Klitschko. Appeal of the Klitschko brothers to the world.

## **How Putin, with the help of Lenin, "created" Ukraine. 2 months before the war. December 23, 2021**

Two months before Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Putin gave a final press conference in which he justified why a country like Ukraine has no right to exist. He stated that the Ukrainians were invented by Count Potocki, and Ukraine was created by Vladimir Lenin.

Why it was important for Putin to level the historical past of Russia and why the capture of Kyiv in February 2022 was fundamental for him.

## **Triple blow to Belarus. Lukashenka's betrayal. February 2022**

The main attack on Kyiv, starting from February 24, was carried out from the territory of Belarus. Until that time, both Lukashenka and the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Belarus argued that there was no threat to Ukrainians.

A story about the betrayal of the Belarusians and how the invasion of the Kyiv region began.

## **Zelensky vs Klitschko. 3 years before the war. Year 2019**

The story of the complicated relationship between President Zelensky and Kyiv Mayor Klitschko during the first two and a half years of Zelensky's presidency.

A story about how Zelensky's team wanted to take control of the capital, and Klitschko fought for his independence from the President's Office. On the eve of the war, the two teams were „on knives“. But the war put the confrontation on pause. Zelensky and Klitschko have only one enemy - Putin.

# Sergii Rudenko

## Synopsis

### Round two. Battle for the Gostomel airfield, February 24-25

The military airfield in Gostomel is located 25 kilometers from Kyiv. It was attacked by Russian troops on the very first day of the war - February 24th. A group of 35 Russian Ka-52 and Mi-8 helicopters with paratroopers on board tried to take control of the airfield in Gostomel, which was supposed to become a springboard for the Russian army to attack Kyiv. However, the Russian attack failed. The enemy has been destroyed. This is the first and important battle of the Ukrainian army for the capital.

Eyewitness accounts of the battles for Gostomel - fighters of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Dmitry Linko and Igor Lapin.

### Two airports of Igor Lapin. 8 years before the war. Year 2014

Igor Lapin is one of the participants in the Revolution of Dignity. With the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014, he went to the front as a volunteer. He was the commander of the „West“ company of the 24th battalion of territorial defense „Aidar“ of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Lapin with his unit fought for the Luhansk airport and the village of Shchastya.

The author of the book met Lapin in the fall of 2014. The combat commander became a People's Deputy of Ukraine. Since then, Sergei Rudenko has made many television programs featuring Lapin.

On February 23, 2022, the next broadcast of Sergei Rudenko and Igor Lapin was scheduled, but it did not take place. Lapin again took up arms - and went to fight for Gostomel, Bucha, Lugansk region.

### Round three. Terodefense of actor Akhtem Seitablaev, February 25

In 2019, the author of the book Sergey Rudenko made a big interview with the popular theater and film actor Akhtem Seitablaev. In it, the actor spoke about his feelings about the annexation of Crimea and about his directorial debut - about the epic film „Cyborgs“ - about the defenders of the Donetsk airport. Then Akhtem could not even imagine that in three years he would defend Ukraine.

In 2022, in the first days of the great war, he enlisted in the ranks of the territorial defense of Kyiv. About how the defense of the Ukrainian capital was organized - a story from the first person.

An unwanted witness to the annexation of Crimea. 8 years before the war. Year 2014

The story of Akhtem Seitablaev, who in 2014 became an unwanted witness to the annexation of Crimea. The history of the occupation of the Russian army of Ukraine - from the first person. Akhtem Seitablaev tells Sergei Rudenko about how the Kremlin came to Ukrainian soil.

### Round four. Russian saboteurs in Kyiv. 25 February

On the second day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, sabotage groups became more active in Kyiv. The fight against them was carried out on the streets of the capital. They rushed to the center of the capital - to the central offices of the country.

Klitschko urged the people of Kiev to destroy marks for adjusting the fire, which the saboteurs left in the city, and join the defense of Kyiv. 17 thousand Kalashnikov assault rifles ended up in the hands of the people of Kiev, who wanted to protect themselves and their city. The Russians were preparing to destroy Kyiv. Kyiv was preparing to destroy the Russians.

### Pink Floyd, Andrey Khlyvnyuk and red viburnum, February 25

The leader of the popular Ukrainian group „Boom Box“ Andriy Khlyvnyuk signed up for the capital's territorial defense from the first days of the great war. On February 25, in the center of Kyiv, he sang the chorus of the old Ukrainian song „Oh, there is a red viburnum in the meadow.“ The video with Khlyvnyuk became viral on the net, and the song became a symbol of the fight against Russian invaders. Pink Floyd made a separate track for this song, which made it popular in the world.

A story about Andriy Khlyvnyuk, a singer and defender of Ukraine.

# Sergii Rudenko

## Synopsis

**Round five. Defense of the Kyiv airport. Battalion „Beetles“. Feb 25-April 5**

A fascinating story of the defense of the Kiev airport by the people of Kyiv, on which the Russian troops planned to land. The defense was led by the legendary General Sergei Krivonos, who, on his own initiative, took command. Moreover, he did this on a voluntary basis, since at that moment he was retired.

**Brothers Klitschko and Tsybulko. 33 years before the war. Year 1989**

The story about the acquaintance of the author of the book, Sergei Rudenko, with the future politician Vladimir Tsybulko, who fell under Russian occupation in February 2022, and about the meeting with the Klitschko brothers long before the war. These two stories are closely intertwined. The history of a peaceful, carefree life and the history of times of war.

This is the story of Vladimir Tsybulko and the Klitschko brothers for 30 years.

**Round six. At gunpoint. Blistavica. Feb 25-March 31**

The story of Vladimir Tsybulko about being in the occupation in the village of Blistavitsa, which is located 20 kilometers from Kyiv.

Vivid evidence of the Russian occupiers, their behavior and how Tsybulko managed to stay alive.

**Round seven. Terror on the streets of Kyiv. February 26**

On the third day of the war, Russian saboteurs began to rampage in the Ukrainian capital. On the streets of Kyiv, they shot a whole family - two adults and three children.

Most of the people of Kiev tried to leave the capital. The enemy was getting closer and closer to the capital. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko was forced to declare a three-day curfew in Kyiv and warn that anyone who appeared on the streets at that time would be mistaken for Russian saboteurs.

On the same day, Wladimir Klitschko addressed the world with a demand to stop Russia's war against Ukraine.

**The Immortal of Ukrainian politics. 26 years before the war. Year 1996**

Roman Bezsmertny (which means "immortal") is a prominent representative of Ukrainian politics. He is one of the creators of the new Ukrainian Constitution. During the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, he was his representative in parliament. In 2019, Roman ran for president, but lost the election.

All this time, the author of the book, Sergei Rudenko, was not only a witness to the rise of the political star Bezsmertny. He was preparing an interview book with him.

Both under Poroshenko and under Zelensky, Bezsmertny worked in the tripartite contact group in Minsk to resolve the Donbass. Ironically, with the outbreak of the war, he ended up under Russian occupation in the village of Motyzhin near Kyiv.

**Round eight. Russian invaders in Motyzhin. February 27**

On the first day of the war, Roman Bezsmertny went to his mother in the village of Motyzhin near Kyiv. But I didn't manage to get my mother out of there. The Russian army entered there. The immortal was trapped. 35 days in occupation.

This is the story of the survival of Roman and his family at gunpoint by the Russian occupiers.

The suburb of Kyiv took the brunt of the Russian army. In fact, Motyzhin, Bucha, Gostomel, Irpen saved Kyiv and prevented Putin's troops from taking the Ukrainian capital.

# Sergii Rudenko

## Synopsis

### **Black square of Ratushny. 11 months before the war. March 20, 2021**

Roman Ratushny, 25, was one of Kyiv's prominent activists. He defended the capital from illegal development, took part in the Revolution of Dignity, and in 2020, not being a member of the UDAR party of Vitali Klitschko, he ran for the Kyiv City Council. He didn't get there, though.

11 months before the war, on March 20, 2021, Ratushny was taken into custody for participating in a rally in support of Odessa activist Sergei Sternenko near the President's Office. The town hall was accused of hooliganism and put under house arrest. The author of this book was also at this protest action. About what happened in March 2021 under the Office of the President and about the role of the Town Hall - according to an eyewitness - Sergey Rudenko.

### **Round nine. Testament of Ratushny. February 28**

In the first days of the war, Roman Ratushny, as part of the territorial defense of the capital, caught Russian saboteurs in Kyiv. Until the end of March, he defended the capital. After that, he went to fight the Russians in the east of the country.

June 8th he died in the battles for Izyum, in the Kharkiv region. Before his death, he managed to write a will. The 25-year-old young man clearly understood that he might not return from the war. A story about what Ratushny dreamed about, what he bequeathed and what hopes his parents and associates placed on him. After his death, one of the streets of Kyiv was named after him, and Protasov Yar, which in peacetime was defended by Ratushny, will be turned into a landscape park and will bear the name of Roman Ratushny.

### **Round ten. Marauders. February 28**

In the first days of the war, marauders appeared in Kyiv. Hundreds of thousands of apartments and offices in the Ukrainian capital were left unattended. Their owners left Kyiv. Marauders opened the premises and took out by car everything that was not under supervision.

The authorities were forced to publicly warn: according to the laws of wartime, marauders would be shot on the spot.

The police and self-defense units fought against the marauders. The robbers were tied to pillory along the streets of the Ukrainian capital. The story of how Kyiv managed to defeat the marauders.

### **Round eleven. Strike on the TV tower. March 1**

On March 1, the Russian invaders launched a missile attack on the Kyiv TV tower. The tower, which was the pride of Ukrainian television people, survived, but the people who were nearby died or were injured.

This strike shocked the people of Kiev not only because the Russians openly shot one of the districts of Kyiv, but because the rockets landed near Babin Yar, the site of the mass execution of Jews by the Germans during World War II.

### **Camouflage wedding at a checkpoint in Kyiv. March 6**

On March 6, 2022, when the Russian army was trying to attack Kyiv, two soldiers of the 128th Territorial Defense Battalion, Lesya Ivashchenko and Valery Filimonov, got married under the roar of artillery cannonade in Kyiv. The wedding at the barricades in camouflage was indicative. Ukrainians were not going to give up and die. They wanted to live and enjoy life, despite Putin's desire to destroy everyone and everything in Ukraine.

### **Round twelve. Buchan massacre. March 2022**

At the end of February 2022, the Russian army occupied small towns located 20 kilometers from Kyiv - Bucha, **Gostomel**, **Irpen**, Borodyanka, Makariv. In them, the Russians staged mass executions, rape of local residents, and robberies. When distributing bread, the Russian invaders shot the chairman of the Gostomel community, Yuri Prilipko.

The murder of civilians in Bucha was called the „Bucha Massacre“. More than 1,000 people died from Russian invaders in March 2022 in the suburbs of Kyiv.

# Sergii Rudenko

## Synopsis

### **10 days in the life of journalist Lena Chichenina in occupied Bucha. Feb 27-March 9**

Testimony of journalist Lena Chichenina about the occupation in Bucha, a city near Kyiv, where massacres, abuse and violence were committed. A story about 10 days spent under Russian occupation.

### **Photojournalist Max Levin. 15 years before the war. Year 2007**

A bright and talented Ukrainian front-line correspondent Maxim Levin began his career at Gazeta 24, which was led by the author of the book, Sergei Rudenko.

These are memories of Levin, who, with the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, visited all the troubled spots in Ukraine. In August 2014, he miraculously survived in the Ilovaik cauldron. With the outbreak of the great war of 2022, he became a photo chronicler of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

### **Round thirteen. Murder of journalist Levin. March 13**

On March 13, photojournalist Maxim Levin, who was filming the Russian offensive near Kyiv, disappeared along with his friend. He stopped communicating and there was no news from him. In early April, his body was found in a forest near Kyiv. Levin and his comrade were killed by the Russians.

### **Round fourteen. Battle for Brovary. March 10**

The battles for Brovary, a city located 25 kilometers northeast of Kyiv, began on the first day of the war, February 24. On March 10, tank columns of the Russian Federation approached this satellite town of the Ukrainian capital. It was on this day that the Ukrainian army gave the decisive battle to Russian tankers. One of the heroines of this battle was Tatyana Chornovol, who, as the operator of the Stugna combat installation, burned Russian tanks.

### **Two wars, two Maidans and the death of Tatyana Chornovol's husband. 25 years before the war**

25 years ago Tatyana Chornovol came to Ukrainian journalism. She worked in the Chechen press center, which operated in Ukraine, wrote reports from the second Russian-Chechen war.

The author of the book, Sergei Rudenko, witnessed how Tatyana Chornovol turned from a journalist into a politician. She was a participant and witness to all important political protests in Ukraine - the action „Ukraine without Kuchma“, the Orange Revolution, the Revolution of Dignity. In December 2013, as an active participant in the Euromaidan, they tried to kill her. In August 2014, her husband died in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Tatyana entered politics and became a people's deputy. In February 2022, she herself went to war with Russia.

A story about the dramatic fate of Tatyana Chornovol.

### **Round fifteen. Russian nuclear blackmail. Chernobyl. Feb 24 - March 30**

Most dramatic episode in the history of the Russian offensive on Kyiv - the capture of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

For 40 days, the Russian army de facto blackmailed both Ukraine and the whole world with a nuclear facility. At the station, in a place contaminated with radiation, 500 Russian soldiers dug in. Chernobyl is well known in Ukraine. Therefore, the Ukrainians did their best to ensure that the Russian army left the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

### **Morgue, Pink Freud and Babel by Evgeny Spirin. Feb-April 2022**

Evgeny Spirin is from Lugansk. With the beginning of the occupation of Donbass by the Russians, he was forced to flee to Kyiv. There he worked as a journalist for 8 years. On February 24, he decided not to leave the war anymore. He and his team from the Internet publication Babel decided to stay in Kyiv - in the basement of the Pink Freud bar. This is the story of how Spirin survived the period of the siege of the Ukrainian capital.

# Sergii Rudenko

## Synopsis

### **Revolution, war and the wedding of Dmitry Linko (Linux). 9 years before the war. Year 2013**

The story of Dmitry Linko, who came to the war in 2014. Then he was involved in politics - he was a deputy of the Verkhovna Rada. He met the war in the status of deputy chairman of the Kirovograd Regional Council. But he spent the whole spring of 2022 in battles for Kyiv and the Kyiv region.

### **Round sixteen. Battle for Lukyanovka. March 24**

The story of the commander of the battalion „Stugna“ Dmitry Linko about the battles in the Kyiv region with the Russian army. One of the main battles - the battle for the village of Lukyanovka near Kyiv - a battle that did not allow the Russian army to move on the Ukrainian capital.

Eyewitness account.

### **Two wars and one enemy of Astamur Gumba („Abkhaz“). 33 years before the war. War with Russia. Years 1989-2022**

Astamur Gumba was born in 1989 in Abkhazia. In 1992, when the war began in Sukhumi, Astamur's mother took him to Ukraine. Since then, Natalya (mother), a journalist, has been trying to save her son from the war. He studied in Kyiv, then in Chornogory. But in February 2022, Astamur went to the territorial defense of Kyiv, and after that he went to fight in the Kharkiv region. There he died.

The story of the courageous fighter „Abzakh“.

### **Round seventeen. The retreat of the Russian army from Kyiv. March 25**

On March 25, the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Defense announced the encirclement of the Ukrainian capital. At this time there are fierce battles in the Kyiv region. The Ukrainian army drives the Russian army away from Kyiv. Moscow tried to save face and talks about a planned retreat.

On April 2, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine announced the complete retreat of the Russian army from Kyiv.

### **Unconquered Kyiv. Afterword**

From the moment of its foundation Kyiv has been repeatedly tried to capture by the occupiers - sometimes from the East, sometimes from the West. And every time the Ukrainian capital did not allow this.

The last time it was 81 years ago - when the German fascists entered Kyiv. Putin's attempt to conquer Kyiv is the second in the last 100 years. As then, Kyiv will stand, no one has any doubts about that.

The battle for Kyiv is already history. Although it is far from being completed, it gives a complete picture not only of the nature of the battles for the Ukrainian capital, but also of the nature of the millions of people who stood up to defend Kyiv.

### **The 12 "heroes" in the book:**

- Max Levin, a photojournalist who died near Kyiv
- Roman Bezsmerntny, a politician and diplomat who was near Kyiv under occupation
- Volodymyr Tsibulko, political scientist, poet, who was under occupation near Kyiv
- Lena Chichenina, a journalist who spent 10 days under occupation in Bucha
- Akhtem Seitablayev, actor, director of the film „Cyborgs“, fighter of Territorial Defense of Kyiv, now fighting in the south
- Ihor Lapin, politician, major of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who fought for Gostomel airport near Kyiv
- Tetyana Chornovol, politician, lieutenant of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who burned Russian tanks near Kyiv
- Roman Ratushny, public activist of Kyiv, fighter for Territorial Defense who fought in Kharkiv region and died
- Atamur Gumba, a fighter of Territorial Defense of Kyiv, born in Abkhazia, died in Kharkiv Oblast
- Serhii Kryvonos, Major General, headed the defense of Kiev airport
- Evgeny Spirin, editor-in-chief of the online publication Babel, fled Luhansk before the war in 2014, and in 2022 he sat and worked in a bar in Kyiv surrounded by Russians - in the Pink Freud Bar.
- Andrii Khlyvniuk, a popular singer and Territorial Defense fighter who sang the song „Oi uv Luzi red viburnum“, which he later recorded together with Pink Floyd. The song became a worldwide hit.

# Sergii Rudenko