



Ukrainian Drama
TRANSLATIONS

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Play **EN CALL THINGS BY THEIR NAMES**
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translated

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Kytsenko

CALL THINGS BY THEIR NAMES

Translated from the Ukrainian by John Freedman with Natalia Bratus

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A war-ning.

When I was a teenager, my family lived in the small town of Zhdanivka in the Donetsk region. The city of Zhdaniv was 200 kilometers away, on the shores of the Sea of Azov. Confused tourists heading for Zhdaniv regularly arrived at our bus station in Zhdanivka. In 1989, Zhdaniv was renamed Mariupol, and we seriously discussed whether we might change the name of "Zhdanivka" to "Mariupolivka." That never happened. But in 2017, Marshal Zhukov Street, where I lived in Kyiv, was renamed Kuban

of Ukraine. Around this same time, the street named for the January Uprising of 1918 was renamed in honor of Ivan Mazepa, while Moscow Prospect was renamed after Stepan Bandera. In those years, there were still many renamings going on within the framework of decommunization - villages, streets, metro stations - and at first it was confusing and annoying. But the new names took root: because they are OURS.

Honestly, I would rename many other things: "Soviet champagne"; "Zhiguli" beer; "Russian" cheese. Being a rational person, I would advise these manufacturers to change their names urgently: otherwise their products will just spoil in warehouses because those names will get stuck in everyone's throat. (As I have been writing this text, "Russian" cheese was renamed "Anti-Russian.")

Then there are a number of cases where renaming is a debatable issue. For example, Putin for Hitler. After a detailed study of the issue, I don't believe they should be equated.

The Nazi leader was incompetent, but an artist; he at least had some traces of taste. Before plunging his people into an abyss, Herr Adolf managed to paint a convincing picture of the future. Finally, in defeat, he had the courage to lay hands on himself. True, only after the fall of Berlin, but still, that wasn't bad.

As a zealous officer of the FSB, Putin possesses not a single hint of creativity. He never speaks a word of the future - only about the Great Past, and not even of the Soviet period, but of days when toilets were a hole in the ground. You find yourself listening to the demented delusion of this old man - and you realize: the hell he will lay hands on himself. No, he'll throw nuclear bombs at the entire world. Wouldn't you say that Putin is worse than Hitler?

The immutable Russian president is a monkey playing with a nuclear button while sitting on a gas tap. For the safety of everyone, this three-pronged entity must be disassembled forever.

To be honest, I didn't believe until the last moment that PuZin's Russia would attack Ukraine. But when my husband and I leaped up at 5 a.m. on February 24 from the sound of exploding cruise missiles, we knew what was going on even without news reports. Was this a "Special operation," a "conflict," or a "crisis"? No, not one of these words came to mind. And if such "diplomatic definitions" are rinsed of their hypocrisy, you'll have the old standard: "war."

War is when you're going west through Hostomel and a downed helicopter catches fire right above your head, and you rejoice because it belongs to the enemy. It is when you sleep in the bathtub at night, wake up from the bombs and feel the walls

vibrating. It is when you live in the subway for four weeks, know how to distinguish "Grad" rockets from bombing strikes, but don't know if your house survived. Also, when your relatives from Russia say it's all fake.

How did it happen that calling things by their proper names became a civic feat in Russia, Belarus and a few countries in the West? Why such inflated criteria for the truth? It seems so obvious to declare war a war, criminals - criminals, and heroes - heroes. It is important to name the number of dead, captured, and even those Russian soldiers who refuse to return to Russia. After we try them for the crimes they committed, let them rebuild what they destroyed - then, maybe, they can remain with permanent residence status. If they're willing to learn Ukrainian.

Of course, everyone in Ukraine will understand Russian. But will a Russian understand anything here? I remember in 2007 a journalist from St. Petersburg, Sasha, came to work in Kyiv for a Russian-language publication. For a couple of weeks, he complained how difficult it was for him. The last straw was when Sasha went to do an interview and spent an hour looking for Red Banner, or Krasnoznamennaya, Street, not even guessing that he was walking on it. After all, the street signs bore a radically different name, Chervonopraporna, that is, Red Banner Street