

# [***Bernard-Henri Levy s New Film Sends A Message From Ukrainian Trenches: This War Is A Matter Of European Security And World Peace***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6880-SHV1-JBCM-F11T-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 1607 words

**Byline:** Katya Soldak, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Interview with Bernard-Henri Levy about his new film Slava Ukraini and Russia's war in Ukraine.

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French philosopher-filmmaker Bernard-Henri Lévy with Ukrainian soldiers, film Slava Ukraini.

A still from Slava Ukraini, Cohen Media Group

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**A journey across war-ravaged Ukraine brings viewers closer to the realities of Russia s war on Ukraine in Bernard-Henri Levy s new film, Slava Ukraini.**

To document the war as a visual diary, French philosopher and author,Bernard-Henri Levy, led his film crew to the hottest parts of Ukraine last year, coming into close quarters with Russian positions in the country s battle-scarred east.

**-** a Ukrainian slogan which means Glory to Ukraine is co-directed with Marc Roussel. The documentary takes on the style of a travel film sprinkled with conversations with locals, but filmed in a country mercilessly scarred by the war. Levy, 74, and his crew filmed under Russian drone attacks, in the trenches of the messy front lines near now famous cities like Bakhmut, Lyman, Izium, and Kharkiv. Levy delicately balances his narration with the voices of Ukrainians whose lives have been ruined by the war, residents of the bombed towns, and the men and women tasked with defending Ukraine s invaded lands.

His signature black coat and pristine white shirt are out of sync with the background of burned buildings, camouflage and bullet-proof vests that surround him, but it seems to serve a purpose. The striking contrast between his sleek attire and the destroyed and burned residential areas screams loudly.

Over a year ago Ukrainians peacefully lived their lives dressing up for weddings and proms, feeding their pets; children played in parks; women in heels walked the streets. Now there is death, destruction, mass graves, endless accounts of rapes and the torture of civilians by the Russian forces. All committed by Russian servicemen, on the order of Russian president Vladimir Putin, who until recently was a figure accepted on the world stage by the west, despite his record of wars in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, Ukraine in 2014, and numerous violations of international order.

As time goes by, the world seems to grow numb to the images, footage and evidence of the genocide Ukrainians suffer in the heart of Europe.**Slava Ukraini** brings the realities of war and Ukrainian voices straight into the orderly and secure world of western audiences. In an interview after the film s New York s premiere, Levy and I spoke about the film and why Ukraine s war is the critical matter for any ordinary person in Europe and around the globe.

**Katya Soldak:** Did you feel you were risking your life during this journey from Kyiv through all these frontline cities? In the film it was clear the Russians were striking very close to you and your crew, at times.

**Bernard-Henri Levy:**Yes, sometimes yes, for sure. I felt it strongly in Bakhmut, in Izium. There were drones. Of course, you are feeling danger. How can it be different? But Ukrainians risk their lives every day. Much more than me. Why do Ukrainians risk their lives? To protect my family, my country, my values. So the minimum I can do is to be part of that. To be part of that combat. Even if it is a real risk.

**Katya Soldak:** So when you decided to do this journey, and film, what was your primary motivation?

**BHL:** Myprimary motivation was solidarity with the people who were in danger of death. The war in Ukraine isn't under-reported. It was underestimated, that s what was different. We didn t understand what was at stake in Ukraine. It's the very security of Europe, and peace in the world. That's the challenge to show what's at stake.

Through my film I explain clearly that we weren't doing the US a favor by arming them**(Ukrainians Forbes)**. We were working for our own self interest. This is what I wanted to show.

**Katya Soldak:** Why is this war not just Ukrainian? Why does it concern everyone?

**BHL:**That's what Putin says. And it s better from time to time to listen to what the fascist dictators say. Putin said it very clearly: the target is Europe. He wants to create chaos in our countries, he wants to interfere and create a mess in America's elections. He did it once, he probably intends to do it a second time. So we have all the evidence that the target is also the rest of the free world, not only Ukraine.

Ukraine is the front line. We in Europe are the second line. We here in America are the third line, we're under attack, too. And that's what I want to say and to repeat to public opinion in America and all decision-makers in Washington, D.C. This war will matter.

Putin believes in war, he believes that war is a way for him to engage in ***politics***. We in the West didn't want to see that because it would have been too disturbing. If we had accepted what we saw, it would have required some action to stop him much earlier.

I don't want this to happen again. That's why I'm going to Washington, D.C. That's why I'll speak to decision-makers and audiences in D.C., because there's a temptation to say that this war is just a regional affair. There's a temptation to implement a compromise, there probably is a temptation to spare Putin. So it has to be repeated that we would be committing new mistakes for the future.

**Katya Soldak:**What do you think the world does not see now?

**BHL:**One mistake we have committed since the invasion is the delivery of weapons in an incremental way. Incremental, you know, progressive. It was a mistake. To save lives, we should have delivered weapons massively and immediately, not in an incremental way. And it's not too late. We can do it now. We can't**(deliver)**weapons drop by drop, we have to understand that the greater it is, the more massive and the quicker it is, the better it is for saving lives and assuring security. This is what should be understood.

**Katya Soldak:**So when you went to the front lines and you spoke to people, did you get a feeling that they need more, that what they have is not enough, did they talk to you about it?

**BHL:**There are so many places where I saw with my eyes the terrible lack of ammunition and weapons. Ukrainians use them with a great sense of economy, of course, but there isn't enough. I could name some front lines without enough ammunition and which are therefore vulnerable. I will not say which ones, for obvious security reasons.

Early in September, we were at a place very close to Izium the day after its liberation. So morale was high, of course. But they don't have enough weapons. I know that for American opinion, the figures give**(people)**vertigo: billions, tons People feel that we've already delivered a lot. I know that it's not enough if we want to save Ukraine, to save Europe, to save peace and to save lives.

**Katya Soldak:** From an American point of view, we've already invested many billions of dollars into this. So, clearly, I think the US is expecting Ukraine to win, otherwise they wouldn't be spending that much money,

**BHL:**You have two lines**(of thought)**in the West. The line which you are presenting giving Ukraine the means to win. There is a second line, which would be satisfied with a weak Russia. With a weak Putin, but maybe not with Putin at the Hague. You have some people in France, in America, too, who say okay, we're going to weaken Putin, we're going to put him on his knees, but we prefer to keep him down rather than face the risk of somebody else.

This is a mistake. But this mistake exists in the heads of some of the leaders of the West. And I do my best to expose this mistake. In other words, I do my best to convince people that there is no solution other than Russia's total capitulation.

**Katy Soldak:** So what would it look like, that total capitulation?

**BHL:**It would mean, number one, giving Ukraine the means for a counter attack and, number two, providing the means to cause the collapse of the Russian army. The Russians aren't able to resist a massive attack by the Ukrainian army. I saw Lyman, I saw Kharkiv, I saw Kherson, I saw Izium, I saw Hulai Pole; I was there. So I know that each time the Ukrainians have the means and the tools, the Russians aren't able to resist. They will collapse first here, then there and when they collapse in enough places, the whole Russian army will collapse.

If this military collapse happens, Putin will have to accept capitulation, like Germany in 1945. Not like Germany in 1918. Or be taken to the Hague which is my hope.

**Katya Soldak:** And is it going to be one Russia, or smaller states like some people are hoping that it will disintegrate?

**BHL:** We don't know what will happen. You know, each time Russia has lost a war 1905 against Japan, 1916-17 in the First World War, the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s it has (**undergone**) huge political consequences: a democratic revolution in 1905, the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the democratic revolution after Afghanistan. So something huge will happen, it won't be just a military defeat. What? I don't know.

**Katya Soldak:**Did you change over the past year? Was there anything that changed in you or transformed because of this war, in your views, in your perception of certain things?

**BHL:**We all change, We will never be the same again , as the title of thesonggoes in my film,**Slava Ukraini,**by Slava Vakarchuk. We will never be the same again. It's true for all Ukrainians; and it's even true for me. I'm not the same after this war. I am not the same, because for one simple reason: there were some values which I thought were in the process of dying courage, citizen bravery, even the values of Europe they were slowly dying in my home country. And suddenly, thanks to Ukraine, they seem to be reviving. So this is very impressive. And this changed me because it gave me some new hope.

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