

LETTERS FROM

# Ukraine

THE MOMENT  
WHEN LIFE CHANGED  
FOREVER





# **The moment when life changed forever**

## **Letters from Ukraine**



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## Preface

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Almost ten years have passed since the beginning of the war and over a year and a half since the attacks by land, air, and sea. Yet, somehow, brutal and ruthless Russian aggression seems to have become commonplace. We do not freeze in astonishment when we hear about the murders, rapes, tortures, and total destruction wreaked by the Russian invader. We feel tired and sometimes even annoyed. Increasingly often we ask about the price we are paying for this war. Sanctions imposed by the European Union and NATO allies indirectly hit Polish business. Poland is full of Ukrainian refugees who have mixed with pre-war economic migrants. The Ukrainian language can be heard everywhere. We begin to be sceptical and suspicious. We are surprised that Ukrainians can benefit from our social welfare system and even surprised when a Ukrainian worker buys beer in a supermarket at the end of the working day. The original enthusiasm, the selfless desire to help, gradually turns into indifference, and sometimes into reluctance. There are also manifestations of aggression – most often in the virtual space, but there is also direct violence.

With our book, we want to remind readers of the first days of the war. Not the reality experienced in our homes in front of the TV, but the reality experienced by Ukrainians. They woke up on February 24 2022 in a different world. In a world they knew from the stories told by their parents, and most often by their grandparents. The war has become a personal experience for all Ukrainian citizens. Although the conflict began eight years earlier when, after the victory of the Revolution of Dignity, Russia annexed Crimea with the help of “little green men” and, with the participation of special forces, created two so-called people's republics in Donetsk and Luhansk, the common experience of all Ukrainians is the aggression that



began on February 24 2022, initially described by the authorities in the Kremlin with the euphemism a “special operation”. Although the lies of the Kremlin's propaganda reach Poland only to a limited extent, they increasingly penetrate the narratives of those publicists and social network users who see Ukrainians as a threat.

We decided to give voice to direct witnesses and victims of the events from the first days of the war to recall the horror of those days. Let this be a kind of “memento”. We believe that this book is needed especially now, when Western societies are increasingly tired of war and Russian propaganda skilfully manipulates world public opinion.

The book consists of notes from the first days of the war by people involved in the world of science and education, culture, and art, who every day seek the truth in one way or another. Here they express their personal experiences. We are primarily concerned with emotions. We do not publish here cold analyses and more or less rational arguments of political scientists, we do not publish brilliant essays, but we give voice to human emotions, testimonies of tragedy and the shock of the sudden transition from the world of relative peace to the world of war. There is genuine anger, fear, despair, love, and concern. These feelings and emotions cannot be questioned, downplayed, or ignored. We, living in a relatively prosperous and peaceful world, must not forget about the suffering of millions of Ukrainians who not only fight against the occupier every day, but also experience the cruelty of war. We want the authentic recording of the emotions of the first war days to help us accompany and support Ukrainians until their final victory over the aggressor.

In those first difficult months of the Russian invasion, Ukrainians and the entire world united to resist brutal Russian aggression. We saw famous Ukrainian musicians, such as Andriy Khlyvniuk or Ivan Lenjo, who exchanged musical instruments for weapons, joining the defence – of their families, cities, their country, their own, but also our future. There are known stories of famous Ukrainian writers, such as Serhiy Zhadan and Andriy Lyubka, who



became volunteers and sometimes risked their lives to transport aid to civilians and military personnel. We should remember famous Ukrainian scientists such as Yuri Chornomorets. These are just a few names of the authors and heroes of our book. Reading their notes from the first days and weeks of the war allows us to better understand the price of freedom...

In addition to Ukrainian musicians, writers and scientists known to Ukraine and the world, who became soldiers and volunteers, we also collected stories of little-known people, such as the story of a family rescued from occupied Bucha, where the Russians were soon to commit terrible crimes. The text about escaping from occupied Mariupol through the hell of Russian filtration camps is exceedingly difficult to read, but extremely important. Reading this book allows you to understand what it is like to be “underground” in an occupied city, to understand the feelings of a mother who goes abroad with her son in search of a safe place, and her husband stays in Ukraine, and maybe they are seeing him for the last time... Each of these stories shows the feelings and history of specific people, but also reveals the trauma of millions of people, a new generation of Ukrainians who were born and grew up in an independent country and who once again had to experience what their grandparents and great-grandparents did – the loss of the best, most patriotic citizens...

Through these testimonies, we would like to sensitise readers to the voices of those killed in battle and the wounded, to the mortally tired soldiers who are currently in the trenches on the front line. Only when we hear them and respond to their requests... only then will we become a small part of the long-awaited great victory. This Ukrainian victory should kill the empire forever and bring the long-awaited... Freedom for millions of Ukrainians!

We dedicate this book to the memory of those who died for Ukraine.

*Ola Hnatiuk, Andrii Kutsyk, Arkadiusz Modrzejewski*



## **Tomorrow we will wake up one day closer to our victory**

### **24.02. On the border of the Kharkiv region**

**F**riends, hello to everyone! We spent the whole day on the road today because here is our home, here are our families and here is our place. We will play all the concerts later, after our victory. And now we want to advise everyone to stay in their places and do their work, support the Armed Forces of Ukraine and help our fellow citizens who need our help now. Friends, remember one thing: all war is waged for extermination, so we have no right to lose it, we must win it. So let's stick together! Glory to Ukraine!

### **25.02. Kharkiv**

Friends, hello to everyone! Today is February 25, now a quarter to one, this is Kharkiv, Constitution Square. Behind me is the Kharkiv City Council, a blue-yellow Ukrainian flag flying above it, and there are some flowers. I understand that the Kharkiv city government was preparing for the celebration of March 8. An air raid alert was announced an hour ago. In principle, there are few people on the streets of Kharkiv, but the city is calm, there are no explosions, there are no shots, and the city council is standing whole and unharmed, thank God. There are queues of cars at gas stations, and there are also queues in shops, but this is because Ukrainians are prudent people and they prepare for any development of the situation. Sirens appeared and voices were heard. It seems, however, that this is not an air alarm. Therefore, let's not panic, listen to the leadership and support the Armed Forces.



**26.02 4:05 pm**

Friends, I'm trying to upload new videos. For some reason, it does not work.

Friends, all new videos are on my Instagram and Twitter pages. Take a look. Kharkiv defends itself. A queue of men for weapons. They thought Kharkiv would greet them with flowers. Or memorial wreaths. Yesterday it was a bit anxious and empty on the streets, now people have recovered, the city is alive and adapting to new conditions. The main thing – a bunch of men and women, students and businessmen, older and younger want to take up arms, to help the army and deal with logistics. The liberators have no idea what awaits them here. Don't panic, everything will be in Ukraine.

**26.02 4:45 pm**

We went around almost the whole city today – we were in Bavaria, Osnov, near the airport, in the center, on Northern Saltivka, just on Saltivka, on KhTZ, in the east we reached Proletarska, we were not allowed to go any further, on Moskalivka, on Kholodnaya Gora. People are a little worried, but there is no panic. There are many policemen on the streets – they catch “leftists”. We also caught a couple and asked them to show their phones and not to make videos of our military. We understood and agreed. Yesterday we stopped near the airport, ours reacted in a minute and a half, put us in the snow, then took autographs. The Ukrainian military works hard and professionally. Everyone is motivated, they want to tear the enemies with their teeth. I saw a queue of men near the mobilization point – everyone wants to take up arms. I stood for 10 minutes near the tent on the square – several cars with things for the army drove up, and three men (in 10 minutes) asked where to sign up for the Teroborona. Queuing for bread. In general, there are queues everywhere. But the queues are calm, not panicky and not hysterical. We bought coffee in a small shop in Babai. The seller, giving the rest (and not knowing who we were), saying goodbye, said: Glory to the heroes.

**27.02 7:26 pm**

We talked to the volunteers who drove the remnants of the Russian convoy to the 134th school on Shevchenko today. The school burned down. Together with the occupiers. Shame on the school. There are not many occupants. They have 15 dead, burned equipment, and 4 prisoners. We have wounded, all of them are alive, thank God. Kharkiv welcomes the liberators with flowers.

**27.02 11.00 pm**

The sky near Kharkiv is big and clear. Stars are like walnuts. All the constellations are visible. And very quietly, they do not hum. Let it be so. Good night.

**28.02 8:34 am**

Kharkiv is bombed. But there are many people on the streets – standing in lines at pharmacies and shops. Many militaries – check, control. Friends, do not go outside without documents. And it's better not to go out unnecessarily. Talked to our guys – they are a little tired after yesterday. The city is being defended, and Ukrainian flags are flying over the city.

**28.02 2:07 pm**

We were driving through the city just before the shelling. People organize themselves and help each other. Lines for products. Many soldiers and police, all ready and angry, are waiting for the guests. We were on the outskirts, there are roadblocks, and local uncles are standing with hunting rifles. Russians simply have no idea what awaits them here. They brought two cars of ammunition to our boys. Businessmen give volunteers everything they have in their warehouses. The words addressed to the occupiers are not chosen. Kharkiv was bombarded with hail, civilians are dying. Russians are not an army; they are a horde.

**28.02 3:04 pm**

Friends, after yesterday, burnt down the school. They questioned our boys who stormed it. The Russians who entered there were



waiting there, they had provisions there, they had time to bring in machine guns, and they were seriously prepared. However, it did not help them. What am I for? There may be saboteurs in the city, and the police and military are seriously checking everyone. We have also checked now. They drove for the generator, got to our post, stopped us, detained us, took us to the station, checked, apologized, and started taking pictures. Therefore, be careful and responsible. Do not disturb the military. The Armed Forces and the police are working, and they are doing it very professionally. Everything will be Ukraine.

**28.02 9:07 pm**

Well, good night everyone from our friendly team. An hour ago, there was a lot of noise from the airport, but now it has subsided. Kharkiv is big, you can't hear everything from one place. Good luck to all Kharkiv residents. This is our city, our land, our history. Glory to Ukraine!

**1.03 7:36 am**

Kharkiv. The city center was bombarded with rockets. They just hit civilians. Russians are not an army, they are criminals.

Residents of Kharkiv, be careful. If possible, help those who need help. Food, medicine, transport. Let's hold on. They may destroy our homes, but they will not destroy our contempt for them. And hatred.

**2.03 7:31 am**

Familiar entrepreneurs brought several trucks of bread to the city. We are helping, managed to unload one in the dormitories of the Karazin University, and people from nearby buildings lined up. The rest of the cars deliver bread around the city. In general, everyone who can collect aid for the civilian population. The shelling has begun, they are hitting the center. Before that, they saw a column of foreign students, about a hundred people, trying to get out of the city. They have with them the flag of India, it seems. Kharkiv defends itself.

**2.03 10:00 am**

I went to see the university. This is the home of three Kharkiv Nobel laureates. This is the pride of Kharkiv. Just like Karazin University itself, it is the oldest university on the Left Bank. Now it stands with broken windows. The Russian army is shooting up Kharkiv schools. Foreign students cannot leave Kharkiv, the student capital. Russians are barbarians, they came to destroy our history, our culture, and our education. All this is foreign and hostile to them. And we have to protect, restore and further develop all this. I am telling you as an honorary doctor of Kharkiv Karazin University.

**2.03 10:25 am**

Hello from Kharkiv, Ukraine!

The photo was taken today, it is not a video recording of the Russian president. The city is defending itself.

P.S. Damn, the philologist in me is suffering. I wanted to write – these are not Putin's records for you. I realized that the last name must be capitalized, which changed my mind. I decided to write to the President of the Russian Federation. Also, I think, it is necessary with a big one. The problem, in short, is with philology.

P.P.S. Damn, well, they will be small, I'm sorry.

**2.03 12:31 pm**

Reminiscent of the Second World War. First of all, the ideology and moral imperative of the occupiers. They came to free us from ourselves. They don't even have a compelling version for the faint of heart. They just want to destroy us, just in case, just like that. I recorded several audiobooks in the Labor Palace, our dog studio is there. Russians are barbarians, a tribunal is waiting for Russia, otherwise, it simply won't happen.

**3.03 10:28 am**

Kharkiv receives help from all over the country. It is really very important – not just to protect the city, but to protect every resident of Kharkiv. We will continue to live and work here. Friends,



your support is incredible. You really feel it, especially when Russian missiles fly overhead. Russians are barbarians. Kharkiv is holding on.

**3.03. 10:57 am**

An acquaintance from *Kozachai Lopan* told me that this is our border with them. On the morning of the 24th, their tanks entered there. Ours, the peaceful ones, came out to listen. A colonel of the Russian army spoke. He said: don't be afraid, everything is OK, we will go to Kyiv quickly, without touching anyone, we will change the government, you will live as we do. Literally. End of quote. They believed that Ukraine could be taken by the district. I'm thinking – is he still alive? Is that all?

**5.03 7:00 pm**

Dnipro, a huge thank you to everyone who responded today. We have found many things, agreed on many things, we are coming back, we are working further.

An amazing sense of unity and determination. The Russians are crazy if they think of coming here. Although, if they don't think about it, they're still crazy. Barbarians.

I noticed one more thing – there are people at the mobilization and volunteer points, and a lot of them seem to be from our concerts, an intelligent, effective, intelligent audience. What a thrill it is to see such eyes.

They bought clothes for good people in the store. The intelligent-looking seller with a beard, hearing the word “socks”, gave me slippers. Then I understood, felt ashamed, and switched to Ukrainian. Quite normal, by the way. He doesn't really want to be “released” by the Russians. One word, Dnipro – thank you!

**6.03 5:44 pm**

Today the sky over Kharkiv was high and clear, and the clouds were kind of frivolous. Heavy caps of snowfall from the roofs. The city itself is quiet, so when it snows, people look back at this sound.

It's spring in the city. And there is war in the city. The center is empty, and when you leave – more people. The suburbs are generally lively. Maybe because it was relatively quiet during the day. A lot of our military, a lot of men from the Terrodefense. Fortress city, one word. Very beautiful, spring, sunny. We want to rebuild it as soon as possible, throwing abroad and into oblivion all that abomination that came to us from the east. It will continue to be a city of poets and universities, you'll see. The national flag still hangs over the city.

**6.03 7:51 pm**

And so, in the context of Russian chauvinism, with all its markers, stereotypes and established positions. How much more limited can culture be than language? For the language of an ordinary Kharkiv (Russian-speaking, of course) policeman, who will now not be called scumbags in Ukraine, but rather the police who pull out from under the rubble Russian-speaking grandmothers who voted for pro-Russian parties, and who are now being killed by airstrikes by the president of the country, which is the heiress “great Russian culture”. In the context of history, this policeman is far more powerful and convincing than the entire imperial tradition, with its golden and silver ages. He saves people. And imperial culture kills them. Yes, yes, it is the culture, and the whole fake dead context behind it, and which we are all accustomed to tolerating – well, because it is the “grand narrative”. In fact, it is a grand narrative that has always justified violence and contempt for others, one way or another.

In this war, culture again suffered a crushing defeat. This time – “the culture of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy”. And it is somehow impossible to get angry here. Because of the defeat of culture, in reality, is civilians burned by hail. And the military too, by the way.

It is clear that in the second week of the third world war it is difficult to predict anything, but it is already clear – no matter how long our beautiful and irresponsible world lasts, no matter what



further configurations European civilization acquires (yes, yes – it is the humanistically oriented heiress of Athens and Alexandria who tried for eight years to swallow the annexation of Crimea and Russian tanks in Donbas) – Tolstoy and Dostoevsky suffered a crushing defeat. As well as Russian ballet, Russian avant-garde (which, to a large extent, is not Russian, but ours, Ukrainian), and at the same time - Russian hockey, Russian football (well, this was bad even before the war). The people who are not worthy to stop before bombing cities in a foreign country have no right to shift the blame to conditional Adolf Aloizovich. This is now your shared burden. You are now tagged. Fritz – it was a normal name before the Second World War, right? And still as a label. So now it will be with your names. Therefore, you can no longer hide behind Dostoevsky. The “great Russian humanistic” culture is going to the bottom, like the unwieldy “Titanic”. I mean, I’m sorry, like a Russian warship.

P.S. The only thing is that in 60 years in the future Tarantino will make a feature film about you. But you will be freaks in this movie too. Inglorious.

**7.03 10:31 am**

A shell damaged the legendary building “Slovo”. It is quite natural for the Russians: they have always destroyed our culture. However, this time they will not succeed. Russians are barbarians. And we will rebuild Slovo.

**7.03 9:44 pm**

And a little more about choice. In war, it appears abruptly, unpredictably and often inevitably. And then you already make some decision, take some steps, decide on something, refuse something.

These days, perhaps the most amazing and inspiring people are the people you happen to see. Police patrolmen and women volunteers, priests and drivers, special forces and villagers with hunting weapons in their hands. Behind this, somehow, the outline of the people, who, in the end, felt their strength, the strength of

their rage, but also the strength of their unity, can be seen deeply and clearly. Not the electorate divided between politicians, but the society with which the politicians have finally begun to speak openly and honestly. It is very important to record this moment of mutual trust and mutual respect so that after the victory, we try not to lose it.

**9.03 6:52 pm**

We, Ukrainians, are just getting started – Shevchenko's quotes immediately appear. It was so during all revolutions, so it is today. I can't imagine Russians going into battle reciting Pushkin or going to the barricades with Saltykov-Shchedrin quotes. And in general – I don't really imagine them at the barricades.

It is good that we have Taras Hryhorovych. Happy birthday, national poet!

**10.03 9:27 am**

Now you understand how important the last eight years were for us – years of real change. How much we have managed to change in these eight years. And the army, and society, and the state as such. I understand that we Ukrainians like to complain, but still. If the Russians started a full-scale war in 2014, there would most likely be no resistance or unity. The Russians simply do not understand what has been happening here for the last eight years. Hence all this delusion of theirs about denazification. And instead, what happened? We have evolved. And they decomposed. And it will continue to be the same.

And we filled our bags with various useful things and are already on our way to Kharkiv. We carry medicine and products for several families. Good luck to everyone.

**10.03 2:13 pm**

Winter has returned to Kharkiv. In the morning, the streets were just covered with dry prickly snow, and in the afternoon it was just blowing. This makes the city seem big and cold. Many vans and minibuses are driving around the city, transporting humanitarian

workers. In the streets, people carry bags with the received products. On Pushkinska, they suddenly noticed that there was no one at all. It turns out that an air alert has been issued. Residents of the city learned to quickly disappear from the streets. Although someone goes further in his affairs. In general, the city is quickly organized, police patrols are rushing, and utility workers are taking out the garbage. From under the deep fresh snow, the outline of the city that we know, love, and in which we are going to continue to live can be seen. The national flag flies over the city.

**11.03 10:20 am**

Empty March streets of Kharkiv and the cold metal of tram tracks. During these two weeks, the city has changed a lot, you can feel the strength coming through the pain. The main thing is to save the lives of those who live here. And the innate Kharkiv business acumen and frivolity will surely return to the streets of the city.

And yes, this is not a war between countries – it is a genocide of Ukrainians.

**11.03 7:05 pm**

The girlfriend of our fallen soldier was taken away yesterday. She returned from the funeral. She was quiet, worried more about her grandparents, and asked to bring them medicine.

And so I thought: it is clear that all of us are largely guided in our assessments and emotions by the information field we have chosen (or imposed on us). Go to some popular Russian, let's say, Telegram channel (because they don't have FB channels anymore) – they have a completely different reality and a completely different war there: Ukraine is destroying its own cities, Ukraine is threatening the whole world, Ukraine itself blocks its citizens in the surrounded cities. They have a different reality, they perceive video footage of burning Russian tanks only as part of counter-propaganda.

But there is such a thing: any information field, any propaganda narrative is a collective thing. And curses and revenge are also personal things. And the Russians will now have to live with this

for a very, very long time – with our curse and our revenge. And collective. And personal. They have to live with it now.

**11.03 10:19 pm**

And I want to say the following. I was quite skeptical of the current government. This thing impressed me the most – the 2019 elections brought a bunch of young people to the offices of power. Not my peers, because what a young person I am, but a really young political youth, behind whom there was no membership in dozens of parties or work in various dubious Cabinet offices. And that's why these young people, I thought, behave like old Kuchm functionaries? Where did they get this childish attraction to money and points? Where is their difference? This is even though with many of them – from ministers to mayors and governors – I personally happened to think did useful, as it seems to me, things to this day. But all the same – he looked in the direction of the government quarter and asked himself: where is your otherness?

And now it can be seen with the naked eye. Advisors, speakers, ministers, interlocutors, officers, mayors, commanders – forty-year-old boys and girls, on whose generation fell this cruel lot of defense of the country. And this applies to millions of fighters, volunteers, volunteers – people from whom the deification of the heritage of the 20th century is falling like dirt from new, but so well-chosen berets. Young Ukrainian men and women, against whom they started a war of extermination.

And, let's say, in contrast to them, the leaders of the Russian Federation, Belarus, America and Germany. The first two are old inadequacies from the last millennium, which are very reminiscent of old Russian armoured vehicles: they seem to be armoured vehicles, but old. And Russian, which in itself is not a good characteristic of technology. Well, the last two are careful cabinet clerks, and retired capitulators, without the courage to admit their complicity in everything that is happening.



Of course, I say all this without any idealization (especially in relation to politicians) and relaxation. Obviously, politics is a field where the harvest is able to surprise every year. Obviously, we will all still have many questions, complaints and doubts. But, nonetheless. The 16th day of the war is passing. And the following is thought:

History is a skillful, though sometimes rather cruel, potter. Sometimes it gives our souls such outlines, the existence of which we did not even suspect. Fire adds hardness, of course, but here is this invisible hand of history, eternity – it is the only one that makes things incomprehensible. Let's go to our country. Good night everyone. Tomorrow we will wake up one day closer to our victory.

**12.03 4:00 pm**

In the morning in Kharkiv, it is real spring. You look at the sky – your eyes water from the sunlight. Then it starts babbling, and you automatically bend down and notice wet snow, heavy sticky black soil, and grey asphalt. Utility workers are working in the city, clearing debris, clearing snow. It is noticeable how many volunteers there are in the city, you can distinguish them by the car and trucks. Under the spring sun, Kharkiv residents take a leisurely stroll, facing the sun. Some couples, young people, move from district to district on foot, by trolleybus routes. But all this laziness and dimensionality suddenly disappear, as soon as you notice the grandmother, hunched over, trudging home, clutching a fresh loaf of bread to her chest. At the same time, very expensive wheelbarrows fly by, somewhere in the direction of Oleksiivka. Cars with military personnel are rolling behind them.

Another strange feeling – a small car stops near the house, something frankly hipster, and suddenly a fighter with a machine gun comes out. He holds a bag with warm things in his hands. A girl comes out from the porch, they talk for a while, he gives her a package, lingers in the sun for a moment, warms himself, gets into his hipster car, and heads to the front. In 4 hospitals, the doctor takes

medicine. What is being done there? – he asks. It is clear that he does not have time to follow the news – a lot of work. We tell him what we saw, we agree to bring help in the next few days.

After lunch, there are not many people on the streets. Water drips from the roof. The sun is gradually rolling out of the city. Shadows lengthen. The evening is approaching. It's getting more worrying. Our flag still flies over the city.

**12.03 10:19 pm**

These evenings, Slobozhanshchyna is so anxious, like the lungs of a person who has held his breath. And the evening sky is special. Earlier I would say Gogolivske. But not Gogolivske, no. Shevchenkivske. Without any Little Russian language.

Sleep happily. Tomorrow we will wake up one day closer to our victory.

**13.03 12:22 pm**

Much will be written and sung about this war. I suppose it will be a completely different language. A language that is formed just today, every day, throughout the country. She's in too much pain right now. But enough anger. And most importantly, enough faith and love.

**14.03 8:11 pm**

In a cold March city, the air is shaken by shelling all day long. We communicate with acquaintances whom we have met, and everyone determines in a businesslike manner: this is the arrival – for us, this is the exit – our answer.

Suddenly I noticed that the streets are almost entirely men: some are carrying groceries, some are volunteering, and some are just standing under the entrance, looking at the sky. Previously, they tried to figure out whether it would snow. Now – will there be shelling?

By four o'clock the city is empty, everyone is getting ready, until nightfall. Hoping she would be kind. Motorists extinguish quickly

and with concentration. Spring was palpable during the day, in the evening it becomes more wintery. Our flags fly over the city.

### 14.03 11:06 pm

It was the end of summer, it was sunny and hot. At such a time, the center of Kharkiv breathes dust and sun. My friend, the poet Igor Zarudko, and I left the writers' union and tried to find some beer. It was ten years ago and it was not so easy to find beer in the city center (as everything changed quickly after that, how many pubs, restaurants, and cafes were opened in Kharkiv after the 14th century, how easily and pleasantly the city developed). So, in search of beer, we went to what was then Ivanova Street, now Svoboda Street, and noticed a new establishment. On the sign it was written (in Russian, of course): Old Khem. Cold beer, hot ladies. Perfect advertising, we thought and went in. Repair work was going on inside. Come in a couple of days, they asked us, we will start working.

Within a couple of days, I actually went. Thus began my relationship with the Old Khem pub. Loved this place very much – it's pretty boring, but it's always lively and fun. In the winter of the 14th, we actually had the Euromaidan headquarters there. I remember there was a concert with the *Dogs* (*Zhadan and The Dogs is a Ukrainian ska band from Kharkiv*), and since there was simply no place and the audience was hanging on itself, our guitarist stood somewhere between the audience, far from us, and played from there, from the happy drunken crowd. I remember how at the end of February 14th, during a huge rally against Yanukovych, Yura, one of the owners of Hem, and I went straight from the rally to a construction supermarket to buy a grinder to cut down Lenin. They bought it, and returned it, but a fight was already going on in the square between ours and the stronghold. So Lenin stood still for half a year. A monument to Hemingway stood under Ham. I liked to show it to the guests of Kharkiv. Like, nowhere else, only here.

This house was hit today. They talk about the victims, the collapse, the dead, and the wounded. Hearing about dead people is

especially unbearable. Because you can't get them back. But I think that after the war we will certainly restore all our monuments, bas-reliefs and monuments. Because these are our markers, we use them to build the landscape of our city, lay out our routes, and make marks in our memory. And in general – a decent city can do without a monument to Lenin, but a monument to old Hem is at least beautiful. Good night everyone. Tomorrow we will wake up one day closer to our victory.

**15.03 2:16 pm**

Today, Kharkiv resembles an anthill disturbed by someone's dirty boot - behind the chaotic movement of ants, in fact, a well-coordinated logical operation can be guessed. Everyone is doing what they have to do, everyone is in their place. Ants take care of their anthill because they love it. Everything will be Ukraine.

P.S. I have talked with the leaders of the city and with the military – everyone radiates confidence. Our flags fly over the city.

**15.03 8:12 pm**

May the sky over Kharkiv be quiet. Good night, dear brothers and sisters, tomorrow we will wake up one day closer to our victory. I went to sleep, swayed.

**16.03 7:43 am**

There was no quiet night. Regularly, after the densely compressed silence, the air was shaken by the echoes of explosions. It was as if freight cars were hitching somewhere above. As soon as the curfew ended, the cars started driving. The city lives its own life. Birds can be heard outside. Good morning everyone.

**16.03 2:24 pm**

And now Svyatoslav Ivanovych came to visit us here. I ordered him a car and various useful things for our boys. Slava promised – Slava did. Now our volunteers have an armoured collection vehicle plus a bunch of walkie-talkies and thermal imagers. They need it – they are now cleaning the suburbs from the enemy. Glory, a friend, thank you from all of Ukrainian Kharkiv.



Talked with the mayor and heads of departments. The city lives and works, and utility workers are in close contact with the military. Everyone acts like a coordinated mechanism, the city is fighting.

They were in the subway, talking with Kharkiv residents. Many were left homeless. But no despair – only anger and willingness to help.

They were in the hospital. Our medics are simply fantastic: when there was a breakthrough of enemy artillery some time ago, they took machine guns and occupied a circular area. When the Russians were put to death, they returned to the operating room to help ours. I will definitely write about the hospital separately.

In general, I thank fate for living in this city. I have never seen so much courage, so much strength, and so much humanity as the people of Kharkiv these days. Everything will be Ukraine. Our flags fly over the city.

P.S. There is a baby in one of the photos. This is Bohdanchyk - he was born already during the war. His mother gave birth in the subway, and after giving birth she returned to the subway. This is our future, we all stand for Bohdanchyk's sake.

**16.03 4:23 pm**

Kharkiv residents sing “Chervona Ruta” in the subway. This is a story. And there is no Russia in this story. I love you all.

**16.03 8:02 pm**

Brilliant, incredible doctors of our hospital. Realizing that an invasion was inevitable, they provided themselves with everything necessary for several months at a time. And they refused to leave. There will be separate stories about our doctors after the victory.

Friends, I just want to say to those who do not understand what is happening in our country - this is a people's war. Ukraine has never had such an experience, and here it is. The whole city is against the invaders. It is not clear where the Russian warship will sail here.

**17.03 8:51 am**

History makes strange repetitions, sometimes walking in circles, somewhere tracing new routes. And the symbolism of these days is especially bitter and deep. A city that holds a siege, fighting off a horde, people hiding in the subway, as if in a church, united by singing, men and women who do not bend, because behind them is this city and it must be protected. Everything suddenly became so clear and distinct. You will not erase it, it will remain. It was quiet at night, but in the morning you could hear shooting again. The day has begun, the city has come to life, and everyone is doing their work. Good morning everyone.

**18.03 3:46 pm**

Over the past eight years, I have performed in Germany probably dozens of times. And despite the fact that the majority of Germans quite adequately perceived everything that was happening in our country, supported us, worried about us, and saw different things happening. I remember how at the beginning of all these events, on March 14th, we had a discussion in Berlin with a former East German general. I remember how joyfully part of the public reacted to the general's remarks that "Russia has the right to Crimea", that "Ukraine is to blame for resisting", and so on. I remember how German Trotskyists handed out leaflets at a book forum in Leipzig, saying that the Nazis had come to power in Kyiv. I remember how somewhat bored President Steinmeier asked me about the situation in Ukraine. In short, I remember a lot. So when Spiegel offered to make a report from Kharkiv, he didn't hold back. This, of course, is not an accusation against all Germans – it is a reminder. A reminder that if you feed a rat for a long time, it can grow into a real monster. And that's what to do with this monster – a question that concerns everyone today, not just utility workers in Northern Saltivka.

Here is a link to the original text, if you suddenly do not know German. (<https://www.spiegel.de/.../krieg-in-der-ukraine-liebe...>)

About collective responsibility.

My friends are currently in Kharkiv under fire from Russian “hail”. The projectile exploded a few tens of meters from them and hit a car that was following. 5 seconds saved their lives. They are not military. They are artists. Fashionable young artists. Before the war, they held their exhibitions and lived an artistic life. After the Russian invasion, they remained in the city, engaged in volunteering – delivering food and medicine around the city, and helping civilians. Now they came under fire.

Nowadays, anyone and anywhere can come under fire in Kharkiv: the Russians shell the city chaotically and continuously, hitting residential areas, sleeping areas, schools, hospitals, and kindergartens. Explosions are heard all the time. This is our reality now. However, the city is not afraid, it continues to live its life. It's just that now this life is happening under “hail”.

Kharkiv is very close to the Russian border. So the Russian troops appeared here already on the first day of the war. It seemed that they planned to capture the city quickly and with little bloodshed. Already on the first day, Russian tanks appeared on the district highway around the city. Where they were burned. In general, the defense of the city turned out to be quite effective – the Russians were not allowed into the city, and those groups of them that did break through to Kharkiv were destroyed. It was not possible to encircle the city, Ukrainians burned a huge amount of Russian equipment around Kharkiv itself and destroyed many of the enemy's manpower. Unable to take the city by storm, the Russians began to destroy it with aircraft and missiles. However, having lost a large number of planes over Kharkiv, they are not so willing to fly now. However, they continue to bomb residential buildings, thus wanting to take revenge on the city, which does not surrender.

The city continues to function. All communal services are working, humanitarian aid is going to Kharkiv from the whole

country, and the civilian population is being evacuated. If you don't pay attention to the constant sounds of shelling, you can get the impression that the city lives a normal life. True, there are not many passers-by on the streets. And there are more and more broken houses. In the afternoon, the streets are empty – residents of Kharkiv are preparing for the curfew. At night, periods of silence are replaced by powerful explosions, and from time to time air alarms are announced. The huge sleeping area of the city of Saltivka is suffering the most – the Russians are simply demolishing multi-story buildings with rockets. It was there that my friends were almost killed.

In the morning, I correspond with a priest I know, who stays right there – in the zone of the heaviest shelling, and ask how things are going. More or less, he answers. Will there be a service on Saturday? – I ask. Of course, – he answers, – of course. I do not know how this war is presented in Germany, how it is shown, and what is said about it. I have seen the statements of some politicians who advocate that “NATO should not interfere in the Ukrainian conflict”. That is, not in a war with the aggressor, but a conflict. I personally am not surprised at all. In the last eight years, since the annexation of Crimea, I have had more than enough opportunities to see how citizens of Germany, France and Switzerland are always looking for new ways not to call a spade a spade. That is, not to call Russia an aggressor country, not to call Putin a criminal, not to call the war in Donbas a Russian-Ukrainian war. We have seen how Western governments continue to trade with the Kremlin while speaking nice words about freedom and democracy. I do not know when this war will end and what price we will have to pay for our victory. But already now I want to say about the collective responsibility of the West for everything that is happening here. For too long and too shamelessly you have traded with criminals, for too long you have chosen between principles and your own comfort, forgetting all partnership obligations, for too long you have allowed Russian



propaganda to fill your consciousness with lies about “Ukrainian Nazis” and the civil conflict in Ukraine. It seems to me that after what the Russians did to Mariupol, Kharkiv, Chernihiv and other Ukrainian cities, there can be no compromises in the attitude towards today's Russia.

This is not a war between the Russian army and the Ukrainian army. This is a war between the Russian army and the Ukrainian people. What is happening is a real genocide of the Ukrainian people. The Russians deliberately, systematically and cynically destroy the civilian population, destroy infrastructure, and bomb schools, theatres, museums, churches, and residential buildings. This is the destruction of the Ukrainian people. And for this, the Russians will definitely bear collective responsibility. The following thing should be understood here – in this war, the cities that suffer the most are those that, even after the start of the war in Donbas, were quite loyal to Russia, trying to the last to divide Putin and the Russian people. But during these three weeks, Russia did everything possible to make Russian-speaking Ukrainians of the East dispel their last illusions about the population of the Russian Federation. We are not being killed by some abstract Putin – we are being killed by concrete citizens of the aggressor country who came here precisely for this purpose – to kill us. You can't call it otherwise. The Kremlin can be delusional about “denazification” to any extent, but all these idiotic lies lose all meaning when you see the theatre bombed by the Russians in Mariupol. Finally, I want to say the following. Dear Europeans, have no illusions – this is not a local conflict that will end tomorrow. This is the third world war. And the free civilized world has no right to lose it. If he really considers himself free and civilized.

**20.03 9:59 am**

It is frosty and sunny in Kharkiv. There are a lot of people on the streets, it seems that the townspeople just go out for a walk so as not

to sit at home. Although in reality, everyone does something – someone goes to the pharmacy, someone buys food, someone visits someone. Traffic lights do not work, but drivers politely let pedestrians pass. The feeling that real spring is about to begin. In the morning, there are conversations among the volunteers about the repaired car, about the received medicine, about the missing hot water, about who will take the humanitarian worker where. Everyone is talking on the phone – someone offers help, someone asks for help. The city is cheerful, although a little frozen. Our flags fly over the city.

**21.03 9:11 am**

Real spring has come to Kharkiv. The streets are sunny and hot. The birds are singing louder and louder, over the sirens. People on the streets look at each other questioningly, but not so much with disbelief as with hope. In general, everyone became more attentive. The city center is alive – somewhere they distribute humanitarian aid, somewhere neighbors just gather to talk. They no longer pay attention to explosions from the neighborhood, they are used to it. Walking around the city and talking with friends, you catch yourself thinking that Kharkiv is now a big, not always visible volunteer center. A city with a big heart and incredible humanity. Our flags fly over the city.

**21.03 11:07 am**

New sounds in the urban space: when you walk down the street, broken glass crumbles sharply under your feet. In the center, among the old buildings, destroyed buildings are already being dismantled, shop windows are being patched up, and utility workers are working. We have a lot of work ahead of us. But this work is honest, it does not scare. We will restore everything, we will rebuild everything.

**21.03 12:51 pm**

And I also visited a volunteer center where young people work, really very young people, and I noticed the following thing – how

important and natural it is for them to speak Ukrainian today. Because for them today it is another manifestation and proof of their otherness. This is their marker, and it will now always be with them. The crookedness of the Russians, among other things, also consists in the fact that they never took the trouble to learn a little about us. Accordingly, all that they considered our weak points, so far turns out to be our advantage and the source of our strength. So let it continue to be so. My president. Bitches are Russian, and they are: you will enter the city only in one case – when there are no more of us left here. And there are a lot of us here. And we hate you. Your missiles will not be enough for our anger. You won't be enough for anything at all, come on, get out – we have sowing ahead of us, your scrap metal is getting in the way.

**22.03 9:55 am**

I went to one church (I won't say which one, but definitely not the Moscow Patriarchate). The whole church is filled with humanitarianism, transmitted from all over the country. Talked to the priests. Panotec says: so far the services are not working, we are using the premises to receive help. We pray in other places.

The bodies of the dead Kharkiv residents lie in the yard of the morgue. People come to pick up theirs. Peaceful civilians, not military. Russians will burn in hell.

**22.03 7:28 pm**

Kharkiv children sing the National Anthem of Ukraine in the subway. Four weeks of the war. Today, together with poet friends and actors, they organized a concert for Kharkiv residents who live in the metro. To be honest, I have never heard such sincere applause. In the evening, before the curfew begins, residents of Kharkiv try to make the most of their time – they walk their dogs, and go for a walk with their children. There are unexpectedly many cats on the streets. Good evening, dear brothers and sisters. Tomorrow we will wake up one more day closer to our victory.

**23.03 11:29 am**

The most touching people on the streets of Kharkiv today are janitors. Clean carefully, without hurrying. There is still snow in the yards, but it is hot in the sun, and people in winter clothes feel uncomfortable already – it is spring. Most of the passers-by have bags in their hands – they are carrying something from somewhere. I met an old couple, they recognized me, greeted me, and wished me victory. The owners of small restaurants and boutiques in the center, after the first shock and shelling, are repairing and preserving broken shop windows and doors, putting things in order on the premises. They were in the broken sports complex and university dormitories. The Russians dropped three aerial bombs on the sports complex. That is, it was not an accidental hit, they were hit purposefully. And the complex itself and two dormitories were actually destroyed. Fortunately, no one was hurt. There are many passers-by on Pushkinska Street and a lot of cars in the center. The city is being cleaned and repaired. Street cats hunt pigeons. Our flags fly over the city.

**23.03**

Almost a month after the war. The city, which survived the shock, but quickly recovered, came to its senses and is putting up a worthy fightback – despite the daily (actually more nightly) shelling, despite the constant victims. Amazing stories of people who were not afraid and stood up to protect their city, their country, and their future. Especially beautiful are the children who have already felt spring and are racing through the streets on scooters. Today they played another concert at one of the metro stations. People are a little tired, but not at all discouraged. Life goes on, and people think about the future. Good evening everyone. Tomorrow we will wake up one more day closer to our victory.

**25.03**

Over Kharkiv, piercing, dazzling sun. Even the eyes water from the shine and light. The air is bitter from the suburbs. You can hear

how ours are working – it's as if iron is being overloaded in the sky. Good morning everyone. We loaded up and went.

### 25.03

In the morning, there is a resounding silence in the Kharkiv courtyards. After the night shelling in the air from time to time, only our exits are heard. I met a couple of pensioners, they were looking for a pregnant cat that they didn't have time to feed in the evening. Two cheerful homeless people are sitting under the pharmacy. One of them has a bright children's gun in his hands, he shoots from it. Another laughs. Some kind of sense of place and time. There is smog in the city, with smoke coming from Gagarin Avenue. Aid was transported to different areas of the city. Some are sitting at home, some are hiding in basements. At the same time, large groups of utility workers are walking around, cleaning up garbage. More and more shops are operating, and people are building new communication schemes. Went out of town to pick up a repaired car. Local handymen repair our cars. Free, of course. What, I ask, did any of the locals go to fight? Someone? – they laugh. But there are no places in three places, everything is full, and everyone has signed up. Outside the city, it is already spring, people are sitting on the benches, listening to the sounds of the city. And smoke hangs over the city. And our flags fly.

**23.02**

**W**hen you have covid (after the booster and for the first time during these pandemic times), the family is sick, and the parents are well into their 80s, and even the dog is not feeling well, and when you have to pull everything, be responsible for everyone, you just don't have enough nerves for Putin. This is a “wonderful” story, when even the nerves do not have enough strength. There is simply not enough strength for social activism and a demonstrated civic stance. I feel better, although it is already obvious what needs to be done urgently as soon as the test turns negative, so I started to have enough strength for this post. And already from these “efforts” I had some problems with my ear. This is despite the fact that I am on my feet all the time in one way or another, because I have to take the dog out at least twice a day, take care of the household, take care of it, work as an on-call doctor, nurse and orderly who run the ward: saturation, vitamins, ventilation, etc. Yesterday I worked for half an hour, wrote a simple text for a beautiful person, and I was all wet with sweat, my ears were “stuffed”, my eyes were “burning”. I had no idea that this was possible. Therefore, now I only have enough time for my family, and that: not exactly. Because there is a good rule in the plane: an oxygen mask for yourself, then for the child, and here you just have to be a multi-armed goddess who does everything for everyone at the same time. Due to the “interesting” symptomatology, I feel almost all the time as if I was crying all night, for several days not only my bones/head/muscles hurt, but also my face. My face just hurts, “amazing”. And coffee has turned into an



abomination, it's like such a small thing, but it's like the loss of a part of the identity. There's some coffee there. And even this can be important for a person. And here this shit tries to deny and destroy everything you breathe, everything you are made of, everything you are.

## **24.02**

I never thought I would write this.

That I will wake up not from the smell of coffee, not from a kiss, not from a child's pawing, not from a puppy whining, not from anxiety, not from an alarm clock, not from fresh air, not from the lamentation of sickle-wings<sup>1</sup>, but from explosions. Dear sisters and brothers, let's stick together, help each other, more mercy, less aggression and nerves, gather together, with faith in us and faith in God.

## **24.02**

I am now thinking about the fact that my dad, who will be 84 years old in August, has already survived the attack and occupation of Kyiv. A child of war. In a different area than now, as a very small child, and without COVID, as now, but this is the second time.

He has a cough, to be honest, I don't know how we will manage all this, but yesterday he said: we need to find a deeper hole away from the houses, lie down, settle down with our whole body and keep quiet, that's what we were taught. He was taught when he was 3 years old. Hold the line, dear people.

## **25.02 5:38**

I don't know what your feelings are, and it's clear that I'm “zero” in geopolitics, but when I hear how rumbling and clapping (from Obolon it sounds silent so far), when I remember the guys from Snake island, and I read about the economic sanctions of the EU, I have cognitive dissonance, all this causes.

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<sup>1</sup> Apus birds

**26.02**

I embrace my heart, country! I just hug everyone with all my heart. During this time, I receive messages from all over the world, from people I once met at conferences, it's support, love, it's the sound of a voice, it's different languages, it adds an opportunity to just breathe in my beloved city of Kyiv! My dear people with weapons in their hands, whom I know personally, whom I do not know, gratitude knows no bounds, sincere admiration, love, gratitude, consanguinity. Thank you.

**27.02**

I have some outlaw in my area. At Bogatyrskaya street, now. They are shooting at us.

#obolon #war

Upd is neutralized. But we were warned not to go outside.

**27.02**

I want to thank all the female fighters and male fighters of the information front. Those whose voices our family and I hear around the clock. You are just a point of comfort, of peace, even when the connection is interrupted, even when there are repetitions of extremely useful information, because it irons out the nerves a little, even when the news is disturbing. You are a sound and content of our support. For me, it is a special consolation that I know you personally, I love you, and worry about you.

The entire team of Public Radio UA: First

Dear Iryna Slavinska, Vadym Karpiak, Olena Huseinova, Ludmilka Tyagniryadno.

**27.02**

People of Bucha, Irpin, there are no words and tears to save you now. And it is many times easier for me to write from my less threatened house in Kyiv than for you to live there under all that. But live, please stay alive.

## 27.02

Important information from Israeli friends.

All Chabad centers of Jewish communities, synagogues, are open to absolutely all refugees without emphasis on national or religious affiliation. To all. Food, medicine, essential items from humanitarian aid, which comes from Israel continuously.

## 28.02

I sang "Ukraine not dead yet" with a striking awareness of the meaning: she's not dead yet. Me and my parents and a funny dog. And my city, Kyiv, and the country. For the first time during this time, I fell asleep for a long time, I even saw a dream. Sleep! A small miracle from a peaceful life. I so wanted to remember it, but I can't remember, all the same: I thank all the heavenly forces and, above all, the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Territorial Defense Forces, that I had it. Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Zhytomyr, small and large, with people who are tortured, but not conquered, with victorious people, that the grove hums. Ivankiv with the destroyed national symbols, the paintings of the people's artist Maria Priymachenko causes just physical pain. But like mothers with hastily gathered children in bomb shelters, old women whose bronchial tubes are pierced by these enemy bullets, because the basement is not a place for our old women. Air alarm again, let's defend the Kyiv's sky, dear ones.

## 28.02

These days, my friends from Israel, Ora Levy and Yulia Uritsky, are incredibly supportive

Yes, yes, the main topic: Jewish women support a "Nazi/drug addict"<sup>2</sup>. We met them in the early 2000s on the Anthropologie platform, that's how virtual friendship is. They are incredible people. This is such support, multidimensional, round-the-clock, from advice on where to stand so that you are not bothered or at least less affected, to a master class: how to teach a dog to poop on the

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<sup>2</sup> Means: Ukrainians according to russian propaganda.

balcony. These seem to be little things, but there is a lot behind all this and in parallel. My heart is bursting, thank you, my dear!

With Ora, we talked about how to explain to children what is happening, why we are not loved, or are all enemies? I believe I have a future to think it through and write it out. These days, my girlfriends and friends showed correspondence with relatives and relatives from Russia. It is clear that there is no reason to be surprised, but this: relatives!! Relatives, fuck.

And what do they write? We forgive you and can take you to the prison, why are you shooting at home and children, we didn't vote for Putin, why should we test his shame? Is that what he pays you compensation for after the grave of life? Why are you complicating everything, we are the same people, you played into some nation, it was not necessary to call everything Bandera, all the streets, they will destroy Russian culture. OMG Idiot, f\*\*\* the hell out of our land, lineage, consciousness. I think about those of my Russian friends who are not afraid to protest, are not afraid of arrests, send money for the Ukrainian army, I will not tag you, just know that I know who you are and that you do not swallow "it". But I have no idea how and when we communicate with you, I don't know. As I still don't know if I will manage to survive, me and mine. Well, because you are not in danger.

### 1.03

I am listening to the mayor of Mariupol. He speaks Russian, he speaks with all his heart, he causes me unreal admiration. You are my Kyiv heart. We are in trouble, but we are warm, we as the capital have more, God, protect your beautiful city, so that there is an opportunity, there are enough resources, so that there is this little bit of luck that will maximize your titanic efforts.

### 1.03

Oh, I held myself back long time. Burn in hell, you creatures, carrion, foul rot. They wanted to blow up the TV tower, bastards.

## 2.03

Kyiv. An air alert was announced. I will share with you the heaviness on my heart, the night was calm from the point of view of my corridor, but I know what and most importantly, by whom it was provided. Now many of my friends are leaving the capital, they are refugees, and this entails many difficulties, unthinkable, unfair. I wish you safety and a warm welcome, wherever you are now. I can't shake the guilt of a privileged metropolitan woman who realizes that the majority of the forces are protecting us strongly, and it's succeeding. But, my dear people of the Kyiv suburbs, Trostyanets, Sumy, Chernihiv, Skadovsk, Kherson, Kharkiv.... living pain, Kharkiv, Okhtyrka, Mariupol, Volnovakha, I feel infinite gratitude for your endurance, pain that we have more protection, a feeling of helplessness, happiness when I hear that you are alive, not occupied, not in captivity, that time has the strength to survive, anger, life. I love you very much.

## 2.03

Start from good news. Because it helps to keep order.

So, I wrote a book about children yesterday. For the children, for all of us, for the international community. It is called: "Children of the Air-raid alert". It's protagonist, who is the link between all our children, is Mia from Kolomyia. She was born in the shelter of the maternity hospital on February 25, 19:06, on the second day of resistance.

## 4.03

I'm not a military expert, so I shouldn't write this, but I'll write anyway, yes, Kyiv is being defended, but it blows several times a day, so I have a little moral right.

Closed skies is a vital story, and I don't believe there's any way to secure it without panic attacks or diplomatic cynicism: no, no, we're not active participants in this war. Well, that's what you think,

because a “bastard”<sup>3</sup> doesn't think like that. Act, no matter what pictures you draw for yourself.

Monsters and murderers do not allow the creation of “green corridors”, block the efforts of the Red Cross, do not give people any opportunity to evacuate, defiantly say that they will solve the humanitarian issue on their own, we see what methods are used to “solve” the Ukrainian issue. People without light, heat, water, food, air, women give birth to children in those circumstances, old women just crying with “burnt” eyes. Monsters and killers do not let you fix communications, put out fires, fight destruction. Monsters and killers let evil bandits attack strategic nuclear power plants. These are crazy dumb and mad pussies sitting there who don't understand what this even means to them. Towns were destroyed, people injured, tortured, blocked, shelling is everywhere, bombing of residential quarters, maternity homes, social institutions, railway stations, orphanages.

People trying to move to a safer place face terrible threats along the way. And above all: children and women. Monsters and killers come with an information policy of interfering with the emotions, minds, televisions and phones of the people under siege. This is psychological terror. Monsters and murderers resort to deplorable baseness and brutality, these are volumes of recorded war crimes. So, what are we calling for? No, not for the killing of monsters and murderers, our humane partners, but for the formation of a “safety shield” so that we ourselves could save our own, chase and destroy these monsters.

#CloseTheSky #NoFlightZone

### 5.03

I realized how many important people I have in different places of Ukraine, how my heart aches for all of them. I understood that as a liaison I can do a lot even from my apartment. And for the first

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<sup>3</sup> Putin.



time, you know, the first time, I slept for about 5 hours. 5 hours of sleep + maybe an hour more for the entire 9 + days of the war. It's a win for my nervous system. I love you, small and big Majestic People of My Country. And that funny song loves you too.

### 6.03

Vinnytsia. 8 rockets. The airport was bombed. Forgiven Sunday? Burn not even in hell, it's later, burn, fallen, wherever you are. For this grief that you are doing on my land.

### 6.03

#### WAR IS ALWAYS AGAINST CHILDREN

This is my introduction-preface to the British edition of the Maya's book. 37 children killed, 71 injured, I don't need to go to the search engine, I know these numbers by heart. It's the twelfth day of the war. This is official information that was made public, but the Russian aggressor is bombing, shelling, bombing megacities, towns, roads and villages in all regions of my country, shooting evacuation vehicles, ambulances, children's hospitals, and I am painfully aware that this number is increasing. I wrote this book about different children from different Ukrainian families in 2017, when Crimea was annexed, and part of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine were temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. I am writing this introduction from the corridor, where we are hiding with my mother, who survived World War II as a child, and my dog, because there is another missile threat over the Kyiv sky. I imagine that someone from Maya's class is now praying in a bomb shelter, someone just wants dad to be +- alive, and mom is back from the police patrol, someone has already lost a loved one. Someone spent more than five days getting to the rescue border crossing, someone cries a lot in an unfamiliar town, and someone rereads Harry Potter for the tenth time and believes in magic that protects children. War is always against children. And with this text, I want to shout that the children of my country need international protection, the children of

my country have the right to the present and the future not under siege, not in occupation, not in a bomb shelter, not in a bathroom, not under fire, but in protected peaceful homes of their loving families. The world needs to understand this.

### 7.03

Dry eyes, when you carefully blink your eyes, quietly, as if you are afraid to put your foot on something crunchy. It seems that one movement and something will break. In the messengers, you check whether those who are now blocking the enemy's path to you and your city with their bodies and the bodies of their cities have seen the message: no changes, there is silence in the messengers, so the hell continues. The whole body is pressed into the heart and flaking over it. It hits hard, OMG, as in the direction of the heroic Mykolaiv. Every day still contains elements of normal life. Now I'm thinking about coffee, I haven't tried it after COVID, which turned into a war. Maybe it's worth it? As long as she is there, as long as I am there, and everything is quiet, although there is an air-raid alarm, but the Armed Forces, but the Air Defense Forces – I bow. You understand that some people have already written the same messages, said goodbye to you, and you understand that it is really emotionally exhausting to look at you, because you are in a city where this “bastard” is, and the person is safe, but there are challenges there, you have to somehow build a life. Sometimes there is no strength to speak and answer the question: how are you? Because there are different norms of this “like me”, there are Kyiv, Bucha, Mykolaiv, Henichan, Okhtyrka, Borodyanka, Harkhiv, Mariupol, Chernihiv norms. Well, it's not about your human condition, it's about you and what's around. It's hard to explain, and it's not easy to work as an emotional healer for many people who need it. And it certainly happens that I sound inadequate and without my inherent friendliness, but my resource goes to people close to me. The night passed, it was calm, sometimes you get up already from the

transparent silence, the ringing starts in your ears from it. I want normal, peaceful dubbing. Day 12 of merciless insidious hateful war.

### 7.03

I've been putting this post off for as long as I could.

You have no idea how many questions there are:

- why aren't you going? Are you still in Kyiv??
- you have to think about yourself! We need to live, we need you!

- what are you delaying? But they will drive an armored truck to take you all out, you are not the last person, you can't help but have connections, we are renting you an apartment in Uzhhorod now, what are you thinking, you condemned your parents to death! Kyiv will be taken and taken, there will be battles, bombing, there will be no water, housing, heat, light, you will interfere with the military, you must have a conscience, realize this, do not be Soviet people, leave the city, you are a burden, you will not help.

And so on, and so on, further. And I understand that most of these cries, requests, appeals to me are due to great love, care, big hearts. I won't tell you how my day starts, there is a war in the country, there are a lot of difficult, terrible, unbearable circumstances. Just understand, please, one thing, as if I never gave anyone in my life such reasons to doubt my adequacy. In fact, everyone who is now, for example, in Kyiv, has their own illusions, makes their own mistakes, takes into account various circumstances, but makes difficult decisions. From a strong will to circumstances that cannot be overcome.

My parents are 84 years old, even 2 floors up the stairs turns into an obstacle for them, heart attacks, in the first days of the war, to top it all off, I took them out of COVID. My father was born in Kyiv, he is physically and psychologically connected to the city, my mother dreamed of Kyiv since she was a girl, and here she is, and she gave birth to me here. There are people who leave their parents with their

neighbors, take themselves and their children away. I don't need to take the children out.

My parents sometimes don't quite understand the whole situation, yes, they are scared, and sometimes they are amazingly calm, but they have accepted these circumstances and understand where they want to meet death under the worst circumstances.

I respect that. Try to respect it at least a little too. And I try to fulfill my filial duty honestly and conscientiously. Am I aware that it might be unbearable? So. I realize Am I full of pessimism? It happens, yes.

When I am covered with this state, I actually think about the fact that I have lived a decent life. The truth, a worthy life, was and is useful for people and society, perhaps for the country as well. On the one hand, not enough and little has been done, and on the other: many important things have been done. This happens in moderation for peace and balance. Am I scared? Yes, definitely. Am I clinging to life? Yes, otherwise I would not have moved my life to the corridor like a bug. Do I feel optimistic and hopeful? Yes, sometimes powerfully, sometimes in the background, but I feel it. My friend Katya, who has been protecting all animals since childhood, added parrots and a guinea pig to her large zoo at home: "No one wanted to take her from the zoo, the chinchilla was taken apart, and she is sitting. I didn't want to either, but she has such eyes". And she is also here with me, in Kyiv. And I bought a suit for the wedding, my godson is getting married, damn, take these monsters away, in April. We're just here. Here. That's how it happened. Try to accept it, okay? I hug you.

### 8.03

Today is such a day when in peaceful life I go to the cemetery to Ani and Maxim. Maxim left in 2013, Anya in 2014, young and beautiful people.

I will think of you, my dear. Kiyanka and Chernihivets.

And, also, about every woman on all fronts of Ukrainian struggle, protection, defense, diplomacy, information, volunteering, evacuation, food, industry, culture, sports and more and more.

And about all mothers who protect their children.

And about everyone for whom this carrion and filth blocks the need to leave, get warm, eat, get to water, get to a safe place.

Women of Ukraine, you are incredibly strong people.

### 9.03

We all live in the conditions that people from the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk region and Luhansk region, annexed Crimea, keep in their physical memory, for others it is unknown. Each person has his own experience, we are used to sharing this experience with the whole world, declaring ourselves, having a voice, writing about salvation or accepting more difficult circumstances.

All this is valuable.

But it is important, in my opinion, in everything we do, and even more important, in everything we write, to try and keep the entire perimeter of the country in our heads and hearts. When someone writes that the “orcs” are here for a long time, they are terrorists, there is nothing to count on, but they have no decision what to advise the local authorities and people in these circumstances, think a little about the people of Mariupol or Gostomel. No, they won't read you, there's no light, no heat, no communication, but the daughter who hasn't heard from her mother in Vorzali for a week, the fighter who can't contact his friends in Mariupol, the friends who fight and can't help friends in Gostomel.

Just think about it a little. When someone writes with gratitude that they crossed the border, how difficult it was, how the volunteers helped, and that the path continues from Poland to Germany, please just think, for example, about a mother of three children who lives in Poltava in a state of relative peace and great confusion. Helplessness that increases every day. And she does not know how to act, what to

count on, what to focus on? There are no resources to leave, understanding, where is she now, where are the children, where are the parents, where is the country? It is absolutely normal to think about your safety, and to have a lot of difficulties and confusion in a new place, country, explaining it to children.

But you are building a new and safe life there now. A mother with three children in Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, Mariupol, and elsewhere is not building a new life, she is trying to understand how to survive, how to fight, what this particular day will be like. And still thinks about the fact that there may not be a day. When someone writes that the cold weather coming to Ukraine will harm the orcs' plans, think about the people in the basements. About our people without warmth, light, but with hope, which cannot be taken away by any posts. I understand that to write about it as I am from Kyiv, is to be exposed to different things. From she couldn't leave, weakling, then she gets angry – to resentment for devaluing experiences and an expert point of view. I suppose you might be right about that. The situation is stressful, isn't it? Live because you have to live. Fight if you have the strength. Help, because it saves in such times. Be quiet about how to restore or conserve resources. But try to keep the perimeter of the entire country in your head and heart. Thank you.

*Rusnia* is a typical terrorist group.

The moment they themselves deny that they are human, they are not human. These strikes on Lutsk, Dnipro, and Ivano-Frankivsk are intended, in addition to destruction, murder, and “animalism”, to demonstrate the Kremlin's arm length, oh, how important it is to them, a method of psychological terror with the message: if we want, we will get you wherever you are trying to breathe. As well as a blow to the water supply system of Chernihiv. Like Mariupol, people who, together with the unconquered city, are tortured by terror with the motivation of revenge for this insubordination. And for the unprecedented Ukrainianness of Kharkov, which these nits



cannot survive, they take revenge. Kherson, the entire Ukrainian South hurts a lot. We carry pain stores inside us. Each and every one of us. And I pray for the people of the Kyiv suburbs to reach us unscathed. I wait for my friends, I try to keep an energetic connection with them, I tell them nonsense, just call, call, call their names.

### 12.03

Air-raid alarms throughout Ukraine. "Cattle"<sup>4</sup> show that they are everywhere. Psychological "air" terror. When I wrote about the Children of the Air-raid Alarm, I mostly thought about those cities and towns where the air explodes, roars, and beats, but this applies to everyone.

All night until 8 in anxiety. This is for my Roman Catholic soul:

The head of the Vatican, Pope Francis, in his public speech on Sunday, on the anniversary of his election to the throne, made a statement in support of Ukraine:

"This week, the city that bears the name of the Virgin Mary – Mariupol – became a city-martyr of the fierce war that is ravaging Ukraine. There are no reasons that can justify the barbaric killings of children, innocent and unarmed civilians", Francis said.

I can only pray.

It is difficult for me to understand the geopolitical indecision when the daily losses, murders, shootings, destruction of the civilian population are so obvious, but yes: this is the pain of our people, a burning pain. And someone a little more Western thinks: what a horror, gods, I don't want to look at it! But do you need to do something? I will accept a couple of people from Ukraine, I will try to transfer money, I will go on a picket! And, yes, these are valuable simple actions of every person in a democratic world. However, I am more about governments.

But here is what should be thought about, first of all, in Europe, in addition to the civilizational and humanitarian catastrophe, which

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<sup>4</sup> Russians.

may not frighten or remain unnoticed, the ecological disaster will be impressively visible. It's not just nuclear power plants. These bastards do not understand that they are destroying not just objects, they are poisoning, in particular, the waters of the Dnipro. And the waters of the Dnipro concern not only Ukraine, there is also enough knowledge in geography, it is not politics. We have many production and processing facilities, many of which take into account environmental protocols, but destruction, explosions, all this will definitely affect air quality, nature, landscapes. This is already happening now, you cannot say to the air and water: oh, we have already exhausted the resource of humanitarian support, stay in Ukraine and Poland.

No. You already have it all. Need a little more?

#### **14.03**

My dear people! There are many of you and we are all in circumstances of varying degrees of gravity, because it is a war, not only bombs and explosions fly, as in Kharkiv just now, but also informational impurities. Even if you are waiting for some sane signal from the information space of Russia (from what the hell?), you should understand that in this country, which has already killed 90 of our children and continues to do so; which destroys Mariupol and its fantastic people, the number of our beautiful people, whose lives have been destroyed, may already be 20,000. Shit. 20,000; Which oppresses Kyiv and destroys the Kyiv suburbs and its powerful people, read Anton Senenko so you never forget; which cuts through Chernihiv Oblast, Sumy Oblast, Volnovakh, Severodonetsk. Read how people get out of there in Bogdan Romantsova so that they never forget; which steals and tortures, burns houses, takes away and threatens all patriotic people in places where this abomination has temporarily settled; which rages around heroic Mykolaiv around the clock; who lies, lies, lies and kills. You must understand that on the central channels of such a scumbag country,

there can only be dramatization, production, throw-in, informational pop excuse that will clog our and international info space, and distance our true grief and our struggle. Please delete these posts about this circus. Russian information pressure is going to hell.

### **15.03**

City of wounded people, houses, districts. The capital of a wounded country, torn apart by a smelly enemy, the Russian invaders. And please, keep this perimeter in mind, not stinking Russian propaganda. Only when there will be sorrow: the wretch died. And that: we only accept messages from our informants and journalists, even about happy ones. Alive

### **16.03**

Information policy during the war is an extremely difficult task, you can read a lot of manuals, go through BBC and special forces trainings, but it won't get easier, because it concerns your country and people. First of all, people, because it is important to me, my human rights bell rings in my ears like the thunder of weapons, which I hear practically 24 hours a day. It seems to me that we should think more about people. Panic moods are very easy to sow during these periods, they germinate well, I have had many such crops even in one day. And this is harmful. But no less harmful is delusion, pseudo, endless stories about heroism, various information: in official channels, telegram channels and local groups of places where people are looking for at least something about their relatives, information about rescue and survival, the state of affairs of what here and now, around them. The honesty of communication these days is a possible and unattainable goal, the enemy is listening to us, analyzing, extracting everything possible. But a person has the right to be informed even under these circumstances.

These circumstances teach a person to switch to the day and hour of his residence, and this is difficult to do if there is a habit of seeing the future, planning. It is important for mothers of graduates, in particular, to know at least roughly what to focus on, because this

is a destroyed future, and children and families have lived with this step to higher education for almost two years, intense thinking that has been undermined. However, the confused brain is looking for answers. I don't think that the people of Sumy region and Chernihiv region, I honestly don't think that it is necessary to listen to the calls to stop the tanks head on, it is more important to know where to simply get water, and whether the great land does not forget about them. Because at such moments it seems that he forgets. The people of the temporarily occupied territories need more informational support, care for the families of those who are abducted, in addition to calls to be Ukrainians and to be proud of them, I have the most insane pride for them. It seems to me that the information policy, even during the war, should be based not only on the heroization of our fantastic people in all corners of the country, on the fronts, which are everywhere, on relatively quiet rears, or not so quiet, where people are plowing, but also on other people. On incredible volunteers, who already have a separate specialization as cadets in peaceful life: humanitarian, evacuation, medicine, transportation across the border, children with cancer, animals, etc. My heart is burning with pride, pain and pride again, because I see and feel all this. But, in my opinion, others should not be forgotten in the information policy. Of which there are actually more.

People whom this war beats, wounds, tortures, who cannot see and understand the entire course of the war, the victory and defeat of the army. Those who cannot rely only on information about the losses of the enemy, on ridiculous detachments, because they do not imagine the potential and real scale of what these cattle have, and they are no longer able to see Mariupol, because the whole organism is squeezed in the heart. Who do not understand what this small family means to them, the mother who stayed in Buch, the sister who took her two children and is looking around in Dresden, the neighbor with her two pugs, a well-chosen cat and a shepherd dog, a boy with two infirm old men in his arms , a mother with a baby in

her arms, whose milk has run out, mean all these victories of our diplomacy, victories of the international justice system, downed enemy helicopters, and more and more and more and more. I myself am such a person. I try to live a day. Get some sleep. Write. To feel and help others. And to think about my little family, to find the right words, to laugh, to unite, to explain, to hug, to try not to think, but all the same to think about the terrible, and not to learn in 21 days to stop looking and see prospects.

My body is shaking. Mariupol – I cannot understand how this can happen. Not in condition. This scum threw a powerful bomb at the drama theater, in the bowels of which thousands of people found shelter. This scum threw a powerful bomb without paying attention to the fact that people, risking their lives, made the inscription: CHILDREN. I don't know how to negotiate, how to negotiate, trust, calculate, talk to, no, these are not people who do such things. There is such a novel, I don't remember who the author is "And the whole world is not enough". It seems that the whole world lacks even this. These animals are having fun. Shoot people in line for bread. Kill a child running after a cat. Hailstones hit evacuation buses with exhausted people, who already feel a fragile hope, because they escaped from Mariupol. Abomination. Abomination. How I hate my powerlessness.

### **18.03**

What has actually been happening to Kyiv since the first day, I call Russian roulette. Whether the city is asleep or awake, whether it's night, or morning or day or evening: these bitches run the roulette wheel. And you begin to mentally hold your hands and think where it flew. And this, in my opinion, is distinct psychological terror, ordinary terror and murder.

### **20.03**

I want to talk about fear.

Surely, everyone understands that it is normal to fear for one's life, for the life of one's child, loved ones. Someone can try to

swallow it, and it, like a bulky pill, can get stuck anywhere and interfere with breathing. Sometimes the fear is caused by the fact that your house is beaten mercilessly, the water is melted snow and you still have to collect it outside, and there it flies and howls, you crawl out, because the child's lips are chapped, you crawl and see the body of the neighbor, and also the dog holding in the mouth something similar to a human limb. There is fear when you drive a car at random, and you are stopped by the police, the Kadyrov's soldiers, the other one is reckless, and you have already seen what happened to the others, they climb up to your son with giggles: you are a man, why are you bellowing like a cow? And suddenly they let you through, you're driving, and you hear shots behind you. There is fear when you are dragging an old mother, a dog, a carrier with a cat, somewhere a man is taking three children away in a car, and your life is being shot all around, and you are dragging it all along, because you still can, and you do not understand fear, despair, madness, courage? There is fear when a neighbor went to get bread and did not return. They asked for it in an automatic queue. And it is powerless to sit and howl, because there is no contact with relatives for a day, three, a week, and you know from the news what is happening there. And you are still alive, like a knife. There is fear when every day you wait for shelling, because you are rarely disappointed, somewhere it comes: from the sky, from land positions, fear lays down with you on the floor, wakes up with you, is the first to poke you in the eye with a fingernail: you woke up, right? Did you sleep? No. Didn't sleep. Fine.

There is fear because of war. Just fear, because there is a war, and life is not normalizing. You just can't live with it at all. You can't cope, get along, drive out, switch, you can't.

Just like the pain threshold, the empathy threshold, the fear threshold is different for everyone. And people leave places where they feel fear. These people are different, someone has one backpack,



2 children, a cat and zero resources. Someone has a good suitcase and greater resources, at least financial, on cards, than those people who meet at stations, at the border. But no card can compensate for fear. Finances can help a person get better, that's all. But few people from Kyiv and Kharkiv, from Sumy and the well-kept (I can't write about this without shuddering) neighborhoods of Bucha simply dreamed of leaving their beloved apartments and lives to settle down where they were lucky, in Chernivtsi, Romania, Krakow, Lviv, Uzhhorod. They didn't want to change their lives like that. I am not talking about military tourism and vacation stays in Georgia or Turkey. There are also such cases, I know such people among my acquaintances. I am talking about people who saved their lives, their children, their psyche from a real threat. Fear breaks someone down and makes them confused, and someone concentrates and makes them aggressive. Fear points to our humanity, fear brings animality to the surface. I just want to say to all the cities-centers of comprehensive care and care, that it is exhausting and often thankless work, you come across people who are catastrophically threatened, and this manifests itself in native forms of human behavior: worthy of respect and causing irritation. In 2014–2015 and beyond, many “Donetsk” people came to Kyiv, not because Yanukovych is here and everything is fine, but because the occupiers brought fear, anger, and destroyed life built by hard work in Donetsk. And here, too, there was a lot of excitement: what a shame she has a car! They bought a house for nothing! No wonder, suddenly such a fan is claiming something!

Three wealthy people, whose presence was noticeable and annoying, were responsible for the lives of hundreds of those driven out by the enemy, tired and frightened, who were not noticed. But all these people, and whose life fit in a Lexus and 7 suitcases, and whose life was hidden in a tiny shoulder bag and clothes that were not for the season, were forced to do this. Forced. Forced by war.

Temporarily forced people. And we all have to live with it. There won't be enough painkillers and sedatives for everyone, antibiotics don't work.

### **21.03**

I wrote about the children of the Air Alarm in the first decade of March. It was painful to write this. As if living every story from beginning to end.

I cried for the first time during this time when I was writing this text.

<http://www.barabooka.com.ua/diti-povitryanih-trivog.../>

You can also read it on my page - pinned post at the top. I saw it as part of an advocacy company for the protection of Ukraine, closed skies, saving children, at least relative, if not complete, protection. So that the world is not only ready to welcome our little ones and mothers into its arms, treat them, take away children with diseases, but also consider those who remain here under the murderous weapon. Since then, even more children have died, injured, exhausted, dehydrated, hungry, frozen, blocked, squeezed into basements, cars, deafened by explosions, wounded our happiness. Lena London began to illustrate this text so that word and visualization work together more powerfully. The publishing house "Vydavnytstvo" is very attached to this work. My female colleagues and colleagues work as bridges with colleagues from partner countries, thanks to Kateryna Mikhalitsina, the text was translated into Latvian. Translated into German, English, French. Together we try to do our best.

### **23.03**

I wanted to share photos of Chernihiv, they were taken by my powerful colleague from the days of working on the Document program of Lesya Kharchenko, to write about the connecting bridge, but I did not dare, because there are relatives and dear people of my relatives and dear people. I read letters and testimonies from

Mariupol, but I am not able to distribute them, because relatives and dear people of my relatives and dear people are there. I wanted to be happy that the orcs were trapped in Irpin, Bucha, Gostomel, Vorzal, but there are still relatives and dear people of my relatives and dear people. That's why I keep silent, watch the frantic movement of fuel, missiles, cars, and forces in Belarus and listen to the “growling” of the sky outside the window.

### **24.03**

Outside, on the street, only spring, nature, and even my dog freezes less than me. I freeze and listen. I wanted to record these sounds on a recorder today, but then I changed my mind. For each such sound, anxiety first of all for those towns where you cannot take out the dog under these sounds, you will not be in such a state. I learned to talk to strangers who are in a place where hell is on earth and there are no queues for heaven. I address them by name, I speak to them, I remember something. Due to personal circumstances, my Kyiv has narrowed down to a small radius. And the country has expanded to an incredible perimeter, I'm trying to hold it, not let go. Life in the corridor is quite normal. All the comforts of civilization, apart from the fact that the artillery is arriving, you clearly know the location of the area, the importance of the mileage, where our troops repulsed the enemy. And another Russian roulette, when a murderous and destructive evil force appears in the amazing blue sky of Kyiv painted like church domes.

I have always been a person of action and help. She turned into a person of care and acceptance of help. I work with powerlessness, my little usefulness, nerves, fears, sometimes all the blood is so saturated with empathy that I suffocate.

Physiological manifestations, probably, as in most, fear has hot breath, it comes in waves, it can be overcome. The pain, for example, for Mariupol can be such that I vomit, apologize, in the toilet. I vomit

from hatred, such miscarriages of this state. Air alarms have not become commonplace, but they often cause a feeling of doom and fatigue. I have 3 options for clothes: street night, street day and just street. And when I hear the words “survivor syndrome”, sometimes I feel like they brought flowers to my grave, but this condition can also be worked with. I feel a lot of love these days. To yourself, from yourself. Distant people often show more necessary emotions than close ones. Kiyanka and Kyivans<sup>5</sup> have become closer at times, the signs of online life are like a living star map of the sky: everything is fine with mine, we keep the order, we keep the city. And the city of Kyiv is not easy. It is often disliked, but it loves everyone. Such luck. Often my mother and the dog are sleeping on me in this corridor of ours, they snuggle up to me, my back and heart already hurt, but you gather and hold on. How defenders hold the sky over Ukraine. A month of full-scale “orc’s” invasion.

Kyiv, the capital of indomitability, empathy and freedom.

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<sup>5</sup> People of Kyiv.

## **Notes on 16 days of isolation in Bucha**

**February 24 – Thursday.**

**S**omewhere around 4:10 in the morning, I woke up to the sounds of explosions. The family was sleeping and I went outside to find out what was going on. In the cold air from the direction of Kyiv, powerful explosions and burning fires were heard. Kyiv was bombed. I remembered Putin's recent speech, after which it became clear to me that the issue of war has already been resolved for him. And although we knew about such a possibility, we did not expect that they would dare. Everything immediately became clear to me – this is war!

In a hurry, with trembling legs, I went up to my girls, they snorted quietly, not noticing anything. That's how they slept through the beginning of the war. I didn't wake them up, why? Let them sleep for the last time.

The television showed video footage of the bombings and told that Russia treacherously attacked Ukraine, without warning, from seven directions. This is a full-scale war with the use of all modern weapons systems. In addition to the capital, Odesa, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Mariupol and the main telecommunications and military centers of the country were hit by rockets. The tragic voice of the presenters could not hide their feelings. Films were played almost all day at Inter. All other channels broadcast constant news.

The soul was seized with fear that this was the end for all of us! The mind was numb – how could this happen? How could they? What should we do now? Will the country survive? And what

should everyone do? Run away or stay? But where to run? Who is waiting for us? Thoughts swarmed in my head.

First I told my daughter. Barely poking out an eye, still hiding under the blanket, she asked, “Dad, what happened?” Trying to stay calm, I briefly explained everything. She anxiously looked at me and asked – “what will happen now?” Trying not to express my feelings, I told my wife that Russia had attacked. “WTF” was all the wife managed to say.

The television showed kilometre-long queues of cars leaving the capital. At the family meeting, we decided that we will not run away! What is the point of creating panic and running, there is no honor or shame in this. We will be at home. And there is no one to go to. We don't have relatives in western Ukraine, and we don't have relatives abroad either.

Hope appeared already in the afternoon. It was reported that our army met the enemy and fierce battles were taking place. Zelensky speaks periodically.

Sometime in the afternoon, we heard numerous helicopters approaching from the north. They didn't have time to set down when they started being fired upon. Later, we learned that there was an attempt to land an amphibious assault on the airfield in Gostomel and they managed to seize the runway. It is 5 km from us. A shootout began. Apparently, later they planned to land planes with landing forces here to capture Kyiv. In the evening they said that they were knocked out by the Alpha and the National Guard.

During the first half of the day, bridges around Buchi began to be blown up, over the Irpin river, between Irpin and Romanivka, along which the direct route is 10 km. to Kyiv. Also, in order to prevent them from directly breaking through to Kyiv from Gostomel, they blew up the bridge between Irpin and Gorenka, which is 10 km from the capital. There is only one way to Kyiv – through Zabuchya to the Zhytomyr highway.

After dinner, together with my uncle, I went to the military office to sign up for the Teroborona. On the spot, we saw a bunch of bewildered men, some of whom were standing in lines, giving their contacts, while others were leaving the military base, hastily putting on helmets, bulletproof vests and ammunition. We were told that the weapons had run out, they said that the entire arsenal had been distributed, so we should go home or go to other military units, where there might be weapons.

We met his colleague, a former teacher, who was already guarding the military officer, dressed in an old uniform and holding a cocked Kalashnikov.

All gas stations in Bucha were empty and closed. I stood in line in Irpin at the gas station near the “giraffe”, but there was not enough fuel. Huddled nearby in the Novus.

With small breaks, fire at Gostomel again and again, and every time I run out to look and listen. Not scary at all. The battle for the Gostomel airfield continues all night. Only in the evening, there is hope that they did not succeed in capturing Kyiv instantly.

What a long day. How many events, impressions, and experiences? The hardest day. Because here everything is for the first time.

### **February 25 – Friday.**

The morning began with another attempt by many helicopters to land a Russian landing force in Gostomel. We heard how dozens of “birds” flew in and tried to set down, but almost a minute later the Ukrainian Armed Forces covered them with hail fire. The helicopters immediately began to fly away. It is reported that the landing party managed to gain a foothold and captured the military unit. Artillery fired at them all day long. The earth trembles. Black smoke is pouring out.

Our peaceful life ended so suddenly, that people started looking for safe shelters. Constant cannonades and fear of getting under fire forced people to hide in basements. Our friends from the first day in



the basement of school No. 4 in the center of Bucha. They spend the night there. Later we learned that they had been in the basement for three weeks.

The feeling of unreality of everything that is happening does not leave. How wild it all is to fight in the 21st century. Attacking a peaceful country with so much history and family ties! For what values? It is not clear, why. After that, there is a feeling that everything has changed, and changed so radically and forever that there will no longer be such a world as it was before.

In the evening, we darken the windows and turn on a weak light so that the street is not visible.

**February 26 – Saturday.**

Again fighting for Gostomel. And again shelling, the ground powerfully gives off cannonade. A black cloud rises from there, everything is on fire. They are trying to break through from Gostomel to Bucha and then to Kyiv.

We are effectively cut off. All shops are closed, and pharmacies and gas stations are closed. The city is empty. People are chaotically scurrying around the city in search of food. A feeling of constant anxiety. Consciousness works in the mode – of “what to hear”? No one knows for sure what is happening around. Someone says that he heard about a conversation with acquaintances in Gostomel, who are all sitting in basements, where there is constant shelling.

We have relatives living in Gostomel. It is not known what happened to them.

**February 27 – Sunday.**

The morning begins with an attempt to break through the column of the Russian Federation with the letter V through Bucha. In the center of the city, near Novus, they were met by a security guard. A shootout began. Then we learned that the column was destroyed right in the city. We do not know where exactly. No one went there. After the convoy was eliminated, the bridge between

Bucha and Irpin was blown up. Later, they blew up the bridge on Stoyanka.

The invaders blew up and began looting Novus. As soon as the fighting stopped, the residents of the city began to dismantle the store. The city was isolated, there was no delivery of goods, so everyone rushed to get products.

The massif lost light. There is no Internet, and the provider's network is damaged. There is almost no mobile connection and Internet. Friends don't know what happened to us. There is no water on the massif, the water supply is damaged, and the pumps to pump water are not working. People from high-rise buildings start going to private estates to ask for water. We still have electricity in the cooperative, so we have water. We give people water.

At the same time, a column broke through today from Gostomel to Kyiv, they say that it is the Kadyrivites. They were destroyed. We constantly hear that enemy columns are being destroyed, it is inspiring.

About Ukraine's real losses do not talk.

### **February 28 – Monday.**

Today I accidentally found out that bread is being distributed on a nearby street. The owners themselves distributed bread for free from their shops.

I rode a bicycle around the city. It's amazing how the city has changed these days: it's empty, broken wires are hanging on the streets, and tracks from tank tracks are on the roads. Ruined fences, fallen poles, broken windows, gaping windows black with soot.

Calm. We drove with Anya around Bucha, looking for shops and medicines. The occupiers blew up the entrance to the Novus, and looted. The store is open and after that people started taking out products. Also, near the station, the occupiers smashed a pharmacy and searched for drugs. Now people are dissecting medicine.

It is difficult to adjust to a normal life. I don't want anything. You need to completely change yourself as if to readjust to a different way. Tune into survival mode.

**March 1 – Tuesday.**

An anxious day. Akhtyrka was bombed, the military unit was destroyed, and more than 70 people died. God, what a horror!!! At 8:00 a.m., they were fired upon in Kharkiv near the city administration. Bastards!!!! They start shelling just civilians, and sleeping areas.

I took my mother to us. Went shopping at Silpo in the new Plaza. When I was returning, I heard that a helicopter was flying over the city. There were low clouds, so it was not visible. When I was passing by a high-rise building, I heard a short explosion directly above my head, the remains of the roof fell on my head from the 20th floor. It was an exploding projectile that hit the roof of a high-rise building. I bent down and ran around the corner of the street.

The main thing in a life-critical situation is to maintain an active state of mind, and activity and not to fall into doubts! The philosophical theory should not relax in war and under fire! Philosophical practice is needed – a courageous active life! Active concern for others is important! We must interact with our neighbors, help our neighbors, take care of our own, and not let ourselves be weak!

**March 2 – Wednesday.**

In the afternoon, Anya and I walked along Bucha. We took pictures, talked with people, and watched the consequences of shelling and destruction. Talked to the participants of the terror defense, and they told me the details. They received humanitarian aid: cereals, some rolls. We went to my mother.

Bucha was destroyed in those places where the Russian column marked V was going to Kyiv. It was initially stopped on the street. The new highway, two armored personnel carriers were knocked down. A fight broke out in the center. The rioters shot back and fired at high-rise apartment buildings with large-caliber machine guns and grenade launchers.

For the first time, we saw the breakdown of the column live along the street. Station chaos and death is simply amazing. Everything was burned, nothing alive, only melted and torn metal, burnt scabs of equipment, scattered things and the remains of shell casings and cartridges. Neighboring houses were damaged by the detonation of the equipment, and the house of our acquaintance burned down nearby.

We spoke to eyewitnesses, they told how confidently the Russians drove down the street, with cigarettes in their teeth, and how they were then destroyed. They rushed, trapped in the narrow street, turned around, looking for a way out and did not find it, because everything around them was exploding and burning. Only four armored personnel carriers out of 15 survived. They were thrown right into the yards, hiding behind houses.

### **March 3 – Thursday.**

The battle for Bucha goes on all day. From 6 in the morning, the cannonade started again. It seems that a drone was working, destroying equipment. Then there was a lull, and at 8:30 the shelling resumed. Right now shelling or firefights with cannons in the Bucha-Irpin area. Maybe the column is breaking through, and ours are stopping it?

Battles are taking place in the very center of the city. Today, the flag of Ukraine was removed and then raised above the city council.

We do not have an equipped basement, ours is cold and not adapted. I equipped the basement. I brought an old sofa there, covered the floor, and brought chairs.

In fact, all day there was fierce fighting around Bucha of such an intensity that we had never encountered anything like it. Constant, unceasing cannonade in the districts of Vorzel, Irpin, and Gostomel. Rashists break through to Kyiv.

### **March 4 – Friday.**

There was a lot of shooting at night and the shelling continues now. The front is approaching. Enemies want to keep Gostomel.

There is no fear and panic, we are already used to gunshots and explosions and sometimes we don't pay attention to them. We are in a situation where time seems to have stopped. We are waiting, just waiting for information that everything will be finished soon. We catch any information from the front.

There was shelling. Electricity went out in the cooperative. All! We have no light, heat or water. The heating and the refrigerator were turned off. They say that the substation is destroyed and it is not known when it will be repaired. But as long as we have gas, we can cook food. The house begins to cool without heating. Outside, the temperature is below zero.

Intense shelling does not abate. Although they are constantly shooting, we somehow did not run to the basement before that. We simply converged in the corridor and waited. But today we climbed into the basement for the first time. We sat for a while and got out, it's hard to sit there without light in the cold.

We got out and started cooking something under the candles.

### **March 5 – Saturday.**

The morning begins with the fact that a column of roofers passes our windows. We take pictures of a lot of equipment. Now it is impossible to finally leave Bucha. It is occupied. The convoy drove through the streets of the private sector in the direction of the Epicenter. Literally in 15 minutes. Somewhere in the direction of Vorzel, our artillery went into action – they fired at columns of artillery.

It is amazing how familiar people change in survival conditions. Good neighbors, with whom we used to communicate normally, as soon as it comes to resources, people immediately turn on the mechanism of protecting their own interests. Sometimes it seems that everyone is for themselves. You start to change yourself, you don't count on anyone but yourself.

It is noticeable that I cannot react detachedly to the panic of others, stress, to constant, daily challenges. The psyche goes into a special state.

I obviously have a “non-working” state of consciousness. I am not used to not writing or reading anything. And when I try to at least think about work, there are no ideas or desire to work.

Saving books. I read Sophocles aloud to the family. King Oedipus and Electra are right on the subject of the inevitability of fate. Helps to adjust to accept the situation. Dante teaches not to lose hope. The gospel is to have faith. Yaroslav Hrytsak helped to understand the past, and Hart helped to understand the present. Prayer gave faith, and meditation – kept calm!

### **March 6 – Sunday.**

Enemy vehicles drive and fire on the streets. It is impressive that their equipment is old and of poor quality. All peeled off, since Soviet times. Their ammunition is just as old.

The occupiers feel insecure, it seems that they are lost in our city. It turned out that they are from remote hinterlands and did not even think that it is possible to live so comfortably. This war is also a complete shock for them!

We went to the Eco Market near the station and met a Russian there. We asked where are they from? It turned out to be from Voronezh. To the question, what are they doing here? They traditionally told that they were on training, and then they were transferred here. We asked again, do they realize the consequences for the two people of what is being done now? They remained silent and said that they did not want to interfere in politics. This is such an ostrich position. They carry out orders but do not want to think about them at all.

### **March 7 – Sunday.**

The house is cooling down. Freezing at night. Indoors + 10, we walk dressed, in several sweaters and outerwear. We lie half-dressed in cold beds, and we warm them with our bodies for a long time. The body is still holding on. To warm up, you need to actively do something, or lie under a blanket. You just can't sit for a long time.

It gets dark around 6 p.m. We traditionally mask the windows and light a candle. Everyone sits down in one room, mostly in the kitchen, we close the extra rooms so that the cold air doesn't come from there, and we have dinner. The lifestyle has changed a lot. Now, after 7 p.m. there is nothing to do, so we talk for a short time and go to bed.

The night is very long and dark. We go to bed around 8 p.m. and wake up a couple of hours later. Then we lie for a long time, thinking about our life, to fall asleep in the morning.

The hardest thing is to be alone with yourself, for a long time in the dark.... Everything is Spinning before your eyes. In order to calm down, you observe yourself, your inner states, emotions, and thoughts. It's hard to motivate yourself to find peace.

### **March 8 – Monday.**

Every day brings new problems that need to be solved. Gas gone. Now we can only cook outside. Good thing we have firewood. We make a fire and cook food outside every day. The last material values of civilization are disappearing, we are moving into a pre-modern world - life without electricity, gas and comfort.

We have a stock of dry firewood. We have found Ukrainian, village cast iron, which in the villages is taken with rags to put in the furnace. We have set up grills on the barbecue and are cooking food. The difficulty is that it is not easy to brew on the street without some practice. It is difficult to start a fire, and you have to constantly keep the fire going so that it does not go out. There is constant smoke that envelops you and eats out your eyes. You have to throw firewood for hours to make an ordinary soup. And if you still need to heat water or cook more porridge, then you need to either make a fire separately and separately or put two pots next to each other on one fire. During the whole time, we cooked soups several times, cooked meat separately, and fried fish.



**March 9 – Wednesday.**

We learned that “green corridors” are being organized today. I persuaded my girls to pack their bags and leave for Kyiv. The meeting near the city council was initially planned for 10:00, and then it was postponed to 14:00. We got together and went on foot. It's cold outside. All day long, in a strong wind, they waited near the city council for buses to evacuate Bucha. They never arrived, they say they were detained by rioters at roadblocks.

They started cooking something on the street late, so they served food on the street already at night.

**March 10 – Thursday.**

I've been sending my girls all day today. I engaged in boarding buses. At first, we waited a long time for them, and we were not sure that they would come. They even found a private car for Anya. I gave fuel to the driver Yuriy and his wife Sveta, who were driving separate cars, I had 3 liters left of gasoline and then the buses appeared, so Anya sat in a private car to Svitlana, and Valya and mother took different buses. We left around 14:30 and got in touch only around 21:00. They were brought to the station, they spent the night there, and our relative picked them up in the morning. Thank God they are safe. I was very worried because the information was constantly coming that cars could be shot.

After sending my people, I sat alone in the dark and waited for messages. The house is empty and cold. The temperature in the room is 8 degrees. When I lay down, I barely warmed up.

**March 11 – Friday.**

In the morning I wasn't going to leave yet. But then I found out that this was the last day when convoys of cars were allowed to pass. I estimated that almost all the neighbors had left. Only those who have a generator or independent heating from electricity remain. Neighbors have limited resources. Water depends on the gasoline that runs out. There is no electricity, gas, heat, or communication, the

house is very cold. And it will be a cold month. I can last another week on the old water supply, but what about the food, without a refrigerator? It is 7 degrees in the house, the temperature will still drop. And then what? When the corridors are closed, you will have to leave on foot. It's a matter of time. Therefore, I decided, and quite quickly, to gather. And I started tidying up very quickly. My daughter's car was left in the garage. There is no gas there.

I got into my car and drove to the city council. It was impossible to go alone, so I took three pensioners, among whom was a disabled woman, and the man accompanying them.

We drove through the Rashist checkpoints. There are many wrecked cars on the roadside. When I was driving through Zabucchia, a tank pulled out right in front of the car, and I was following it for about a kilometer. Then it turned to the gardens of the dacha. In front of the last roadblock on the Zhytomyr highway, where phones were taken away, right next to it, there was a shot car and next to it lay burnt corpses, apparently trying to break through. Horror! They didn't even clean them and didn't cover them, as if it was something so unimportant. Then came our roadblocks.

Around 6.00pm they were already in the district. I dropped off passengers near the Epicenter and continued on my way. On the way, I did not meet working gas stations.

In total, I spent 16 days in isolation in Bucha. During this time I saw, understood and reassessed a lot! Especially how fleeting human life is! How important mutual assistance is! How important is calmness and firmness of spirit? If there is a meaning in these tests, then in order to change oneself, to save oneself from hatred, panic, false hopes and illusions! How long it will last is unknown! You have to be patient. We will win! Glory to Ukraine!!!

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**Liubov Halan**

*co-founder and head of the “Pryncyp” Human Rights Center  
for Soldiers. Human rights activist, volunteer and researcher, Kyiv*

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**February 25**

**D**ear friends!

Previous morning a barbarous barbaricact has happened towards our country as well as towards the whole civilized world — the Russian Federation has initiated a whole-scaled war against Ukraine! Russian military attacked different parts of the country, but the Armed Forces of Ukraine standis standing against it. They do protect Ukraine with hearts full of love to the Motherland. This outrageous war has to be stopped! Without any weapons in place, we can contribute to stop this awful war! Everyone can refer to his or her government with a requirement to provide Ukraine with military aid. You and only you can knock to your Government! Your country can provide for military and humanitarian aid. It is very important to protect the airspace! We’re calling everyone to stand with Ukraine these days and join the upcoming rallies against the Russian invasion.

Here you can see the schedule of the rallies <https://www.stop-putin.net>

Ukraine needs help of foreign governments in the form of intrusion of military contingent

Please, follow and share information about the real situation in Ukraine among your friends (<https://kyivindependent.com>; <https://www.instagram.com/svidomi> eng), and of course, join the rallies against the Russian Federation in your city!

[#StopRussianAggression](#) [#UkraineUnderAttack](#) [#StopRussia](#)

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Who is going to Lviv and can take my cat? There is a carry and everything. Please help me very much. Today is the first time we stay at home. Well, not at home, but in a safe house that a close friend of ours found for us. Because we didn't like the night in the subway because we couldn't work. I have already lost count of the days, but I will say that I try to sleep and eat to keep myself in order. The first 2 days were very strange and frankly, I was in a terrible mood. On Thursday morning, I had to see off my loved one. I won't lie, there was a day when I already thought that we would never see each other again. The news was bad and I honestly thought it was over. Yes, some part of me just thought that I should just go through it all with dignity. But now I'm sure – they will break their teeth. I am writing this to people from the regions who cannot see Kyiv now. And they only read the news.

Kyiv is now:

- Neighbours of elite quarters, who are identified and handed over to the diversionary group police.
- Small cocktail factories that will treat everyone who enters the city.
- Prompt transmission of information about movement, any suspicious signs, etc.
- Thousands of people from different communities who came to their streets and are ready to take the fight.
- Thousands of people who support each other in transportation, food.

I also have a great company and it turns out that we can do a lot of things. We collected the first million. In a few hours yesterday, contact was organized with numerous pharmacies and their warehouses. Our friends will now work in Ukrainian and international businesses, in particular IT. There are a lot of requests, sorry if I take a long time to answer or redirect. The resource is not

for everything. There is a big problem with bulletproof vests and helmets, uniforms. Unfortunately, it is not quickly resolved. This is breaking my heart and I honestly wish someone could help with this. But so far as it is. The whole country works as one family. This is already a victory. I am writing and I want to roar, because this is unreal pride for all of us. Honour.

P.S. Cat in Lviv. Notes in the margins.

My grandfather, who as a child survived the war, the Nazi occupation of Warsaw, started every morning with a series of actions that put the world in order – laundry washing, breakfast, prayer. And made a list of things for the day. This order was taught to him by his father, who during the hostilities tried to return “normality” to their lives. Because what their enemies wanted was dehumanization, loss of control and dignity. Now I remember him and use every opportunity to sleep, eat normally, get medical treatment, and dress in clean clothes. I have a plan for the day, I make routes and to-do lists. Yes, I keep records. And they always have something about themselves. With this level of multitasking and tasks, only grandfather's school works under such conditions. Therefore, friends, I really ate in a hat.

Two words about volunteering. I feel that very soon we will recover and some processes will become more extensive (like procurement) and organized. Despite the fact that my personal priority because of loved ones is the support of the Territorial Defense Forces, it seems to me that we should now all pay more attention to the needs of the Armed Forces. And I just nod my head in response to all the organizations that which tell me: “Sorry, the priority is the Armed Forces of Ukraine”. The worst thing that can be done now is to thoughtlessly row help "on your own", when the needs of those on the front lines are not met. It is important to keep a cool head, try to act in a coordinated manner and cooperate, share.

In our house, we have initiated the appointment of the farm manager, who collects the real individual needs of the unit. If this

does not happen at the headquarters level, it seems to me that it should be organized as soon as possible in each battalion. This calibrates the actions of volunteers to what is needed. Protects against abuse. Many people these days have received messages from me with the words – “no, I can't help”. Because this work (which is a complex coordination process of entire teams) requires a real assessment of capacity. It is about responsibility and awareness of resources. I hope no one holds a grudge against my refusals. Because this is the least I would like now. It hasn't been a week yet, and I feel like it's been going on forever. Feeling as if the previous life did not exist. And probably this is a protective reaction of my psyche. Because only normal life is the background that makes us realize the horror and devastation they brought to our land. And although I try not to think about my former “normal” life, so as not to make it harder for myself or others, I devote every day to one thought on my little piece of responsibility. That all those who are now fighting, saving their families, burning themselves while helping others will regain their normalcy. This is an important meaning for me now.

### **March 3**

I don't know how to describe to you the naked horror of airstrikes and rocket attacks on our cities. Don't turn away. Look at the photos, videos from our cities that are turning into deadly traps for our people. Look at the photos from our hospitals, where doctors are fighting for the lives of children who became victims of these aerial attacks. Read their messages with pleas to save them from the overcrowded basements. Some events can be actually perceived when you are directly involved. You can even be a caring person, but you can realize the essence of them only when you get close to it. “Close sky over Ukraine” – is not just one of our demands. This is the only thing that can save the world from the accusation of criminal impotence and inaction.

Before the war erupted, some analysts I know said that Russia is pragmatic. Now we understand that they were wrong. They were

trying to comprehend this bandit from the point of view of an adequate person. We live next to a maniac, a psychopath who doesn't know how to lose. A person who would take with himself more than you can imagine while you are making your predictions through a prism of a normal person. I appeal to all my friends in Europe and the world to demand immediate action from your governments to protect us.

Your position as voters of these people matters. Close our sky. Save our people, our houses, and our infrastructure from this maniac. Ukraine is stuffed with nuclear power plants, chemical industry sites, and dangerous production. These can have an enormous impact on the whole planet. Save the world from another environmental disaster that can reach your home as well. Remember remember that non-interference is also a position of choice. Sometimes this position can be seen as complicity.

P.S. Two of my friends were killed by a rocket in the last video. These are the first people close to me that were killed in the first week of the war. How many more there will be depends on the whole world now. The least you can do is share this post.

[#NoFlyZone](#)

[#NoFlyZoneOverUkraine](#)

[#CloseTheSkyOverUkraine](#)

[#StopRussia](#)

[#StopPutin](#)

Today, we urgently needed to collect the rest of the individual first-aid kits for ours. She shouted through her acquaintances and Ilya agreed. We got to know each other. Everything was collected quickly like gods and I decided to take a photo as a memory. I look at it first and think “only the remote control is missing”. And Podilskyi District wouldn't be Podil District if it didn't turn out later that Ilya is really a DJ. This time is difficult, but the people in it are unreal!

2 decent boys from Kharkiv ultras died. We have known Sashko since 2014. As a result of the shelling on March 2, the Simmer Polecats Crew team lost two comrades: friend Lis and friend Coach – Oleksandr Klushin. Our task is to support the families and loved ones of the deceased as much as possible, to guide the worthy sons of Ukraine to their last journey with dignity. We ask that our team and its friends, all Kharkiv and Ukrainian fan groups unite as much as possible and support the native victims.

### **March 17**

I have a new character – Valentin Petrovych. An old farm with a small warehouse. Some of my former characters have disappeared forever or are experiencing apathy. Someone has gone into 'ne\_vseremos' mode and is extracting my hyperproductivity. In the first days, I quit my job (everything is ok, I have savings and everything is enough for me) to work where I see my benefit - but even so the workload is super high. And although, obviously, I feel great motivation and anger – I am already very tired. It is a sin to complain in my conditions, but I state.

Petrovych appeared recently, when we organized a small warehouse and inventory began. This old man with a strange sense of humor brought peace. Because he quietly, at his own pace and stably brings order in the designated area of responsibility. Maintains Excel spreadsheets, vacuums indoors. He takes back control and restores order. When we bought him the first rack today – he almost peed himself with joy (it's good that we have a little supply of diapers for adults). He is not the most heroic and not the most interesting character. But I appreciated him. I think that among others he has now to find and support each and every one. The most stable, if somewhat rational and warm character. We all need our Petrovich in such dark times. Because even with the best schedules – this is a long-distance race. I will not give predictions. But with such a level of physical and mental stress, you have to learn to adapt. In



order not to get off this distance, no matter how difficult this path may be. Let our inner Petrovichs help us in this.

They want us to be afraid and live in darkness. And every day we regain our light in what we have now. I am being taught now to adapt the stories of veterans. They have already returned once and some of them once built businesses from scratch, they had really important plans, some had children. I watched as these people left everything on the 24th, closed, stopped. And they went to fight again. There is no past. If you are lucky personally – there will be a future. What remains is “here and now”. We have all lost something or someone. Unfortunately, this will not stop soon, so this state of affairs teaches now to focus on something else, to hold on to something else. Learn to love differently. In order to win a return.

### **March 22**

“Liuba, you don't understand. You and many people haven't fully realized it yet. They came to kill us. To kill. They don't want us to exist”, my friend from Donetsk told me more than a year ago. You were right, I knew it, but I didn't really realize it until now. They came to destroy us. Everyone of us. Those who raised the white flag while taking their family from Kharkiv region, those who put out the word “children” near the Mariupol Drama Theatre, and those who stood in line for bread in Chernihiv. And shootings at peaceful demonstration in Kherson. Now I know what it looks like, how it sounds. There is no international law. There are no rules of war for them. They came to cut us. Stop our lives. Rape and torture us. Existence now depends only on how we protect ourselves and fight these sick bitches. The world is not watching a war, but a genocide that we are trying to stop.

## **The experience of a professor who became a sniper in the war with Russia**

**B**efore the war, I worked as a professor at the Drahomanov National Pedagogical University. My research interests were the history of theology and modern theology. I paid a lot of attention to the criticism of Patriarch Kirill's ideas about the Russian world, which he developed until 2015, and the concepts of the “one Russian people”, which he preached since 2015. Since 2001, he has systematically warned as a scientist, analyst and publicist that secular and ecclesiastical Russia is transforming towards right-wing ideologies up to fascism, first similar to Italian and then similar to German Nazism. But the main direction of my efforts was the return of theology to Ukrainian universities, and the development of research on the border of theology, philosophy, and religious studies. It was possible to do a lot before the war. Many innovative dissertations were defended by Ukrainian Protestants, Orthodox, Greek Catholics, and Catholics. The level of ecumenical and international cooperation of theologians increased, and a single theological scientific and educational space was formed. Chaplains, religious journalists, and peacekeepers were trained and retrained at the Drahomanov National Pedagogical University.

I realized that Putin's full-scale attack on Ukraine took place on the night of February 24, when I heard the explosions. I immediately filled all the containers in the apartment with water. I bought groceries in the morning. Since there was almost nothing in the usual stores, I managed to buy in a store at the monastery of the Moscow

Patriarchate, which I see as a certain irony of fate. It took three days to evacuate the children to the West and to persuade my wife to let me go to the army. Only on Sunday, February 27, my wife agree that I should go to serve in the territorial defense. But at that time, the stocks of weapons in Kyiv ran out, and the new ones had not yet been delivered, and those who wanted to were sent home. The exceptions were those who would come with their own weapons. During the day, I found a friend who could give me a sniper rifle. And at noon on February 28, I came to the local territorial defense battalion. There, as a sniper, I was immediately taken to a platoon consisting of veterans of the Russian-Ukrainian war, who actively fought in 2014–2015 in the most combat-ready Ukrainian units in Donbas. For several days, we successfully caught fire adjusters, scouts and saboteurs on one of the outskirts of Kyiv. From working on the roof of a high-rise building, I not only succeeded in identifying suspicious persons in the surrounding area but also contracted bronchitis. The residents of the area where our unit was located and our doctors together cured my bronchitis, although its remnants still bother me to this day.

Then our company went to the front, supporting units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard in one of the directions where the enemy was trying to break through to Kyiv. It was obvious that the leadership of our company on the spot was not up to the level of understanding specific tasks, although the platoon commanders were extremely professional. It was quickly possible to establish cooperation with the battalions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard, which were already at the scene of the events. I was impressed by the professionalism of the officers, their knowledge of the enemy, and an excellent understanding of how it is possible to effectively wage war when the enemy has an order of magnitude more tanks, when the enemy has more soldiers and artillery across the river when the enemy has several modern helicopters and two Orlan 10 UAVs.

It was especially surprising to see that the officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard know languages, understand all types of weapons produced in the whole world, and are perfectly able to analyze not only the state of affairs in the area of hostilities but also international politics. The calm work of the officers and their subordinate soldiers made it possible to see how in five days all the enemy's tanks, which were provided to his three reinforced infantry regiments, were destroyed. In impotent malice, the enemy's artillery tried to take revenge on our two tanks and gunners for their success. Unfortunately, several comrades from my platoon were killed and wounded during these chaotic firings with the aim of revenge, and I miraculously survived.

The only wish under the shelling, apart from the dream of survival, was the fervent wish for the children and grandchildren of the perpetrators of the war to be at the epicenter of this fiery shaft. The biggest injustice of the current state of affairs is that Putin and his family, his associates from Shoigu to Patriarch Kirill are not on the firing line, whereas young soldiers, civilians, and ordinary officers are, who often barely make ends meet in ordinary life. In ancient times and even during the Napoleonic Wars, military leaders, often with their children of teenage years or older, were on the front lines. Returning the perpetrators of the tragedy and their children to the epicenter of events is the task of the highest justice and the shortest path to establishing peace. The humanity lost by the initiators of the war should be returned, at least artificially, so that Putin begins to treat the residents of Mariupol as if he were himself or his own children, not because he mentioned the golden rule of morality ("do not do to others what you do not wish for yourself and your children"), and because his children would end up in the same peaceful houses that are systematically destroyed by artillery and aviation.

At the front, it was noticeable that we were digging trenches next to the defense line of Kyiv against the Germans in 1941. As soon as

we arrived in the forest, the shelling began and we were saved from shrapnel by hiding in the trenches of 1941, which were more than half filled in, but still were like shallow pits everywhere in the area. On the last day before the rotation, while I sat on the heights and watched for enemy columns approaching, my comrades hid in a concrete pillbox left over from the 1941 defense line. Where Army Group "South" was detained in 1941, a new invasion was also stopped there today.

What was striking about the enemy's actions was that they endlessly tried to bring pontoons across the river to bring over the equipment, and every time they were taken by surprise by artillery strikes, which sank tanks and BMPs along with the pontoons. It was surprising there that in the morning and the evening the Russian artillery shelled the same crossroads in the forest, the same positions, the same streets in the village closest to the front. Having captured the factory on the high-rise, the Russian paratroopers did not know what to do next and simply started setting fire to all the warehouses around the factory, blocks in the village, and neighboring businesses. What did the military meaning of such actions remains a mystery? The intellectual and moral level of Russian soldiers and officers was so far from our ideas about a normal army that we were all genuinely surprised. Even those of us who fought in the Donbas expected the Russians to behave more intelligently and morally during hostilities. But the general barbarization of the population for the sake of their political loyalty has taken away the ability of Russians to think independently and have human feelings, common to every cultured civilized person.

Out of thousands of people, 15–20 people remained in the village in the immediate rear vicinity. Mostly they were old people and a few of their relatives, men left to care for small communities of old men and women. We were impressed by the full support of the local population. When an 80-year-old old man saw that our comrade had lost his own jacket during the fighting, he removed a

similar old jacket from himself and could not be refused this gesture in the spirit of the Gospel. A few minutes later, the grandfather was already walking in another jacket from his wife's stocks, glad that he was able to be of some use to the defenders of the Motherland. The locals tried to supplement our military food with their own rations, were surprised that the professor could cook so well, and dined with us.

A significant test for our feelings in this village, the closest habitation to us and where we prepared food, was the presence of a significant number of dogs and cats that were abandoned by their owners for various reasons - evacuation or death. And the better the owners were in the past, the harder it was for the animals, because they did not move away from their native homes, did not go to those parts of the village where life flourished and there was food. It was necessary to convert animals to a new life, which was always successful with cats, but not always successful with dogs. Some of the latter were accustomed to taking food only from their owners and it was impossible to break their habit. I especially remembered such a unique phenomenon: there was a stable near our village, and it was bombed. A herd of ponies ran into our village, looking for grass and water in the streets of the village and the surrounding forest. These ten ponies successfully escaped from the shelling, scaring everyone in the forest with their stomping. After my video of the ponies on social media, their owner realized that he was looking for them in a different place than he should have, contacted me and already had the correct coordinates to search for them. I don't know if he managed to save this small herd of beautiful animals. In one of the houses, we rescued a rabbit that spent ten days alone, because its owners were taken by friends straight from work and could not pick it up. With little food and water, the rabbit survived by overturning a vase of "Love is" chewing gum. Surprisingly, the rabbit not only completely rehabilitated, but also made friends with us, bringing us back to home comfort after the fight even more than cats or dogs.

In addition to the support of the regular army, history, local people and even pets, we felt the love of the people through the volunteers and business people who helped us endlessly with everything from food to sophisticated surveillance systems. I especially want to note that Ukrainian entrepreneurs set a high bar of sacrifice, working wonders in an effort to get us a variety of things that would make us more dangerous to the enemy and increase our chances of survival. Small and medium-sized businesses turned out to be very patriotic, unlike the oligarchs, who agreed to help only with preliminary agreements on global PR of their efforts. It was strange to see how representatives of medium-sized businesses helped much more, but not a word was said about any public thanks, stories in the media or celebratory aid transfers, and the oligarchs set strange preconditions for the aid, which in principle should have been allocated based on a great friendship. It turned out that for the oligarchs and their entourage, friendship had to be combined with PR and could not exist by itself, in the silence of real help, although before the war, I and my comrades in various ways selflessly helped these oligarchs and politicians in the implementation of their projects useful for the whole society. Never once did it occur to us that these oligarchs would ask for help through a pitiful and sneaky petition on social networks, and our help would be covered by the media as a unique action. Indeed, the war showed who knows how to just be friends, and who has only political instincts at work.

The main feature of our tactics is caution. Commanders are trying to protect people. There is no unnecessary heroism that would require defending somewhere or advancing at any cost. The task is to survive and inflict maximum damage to the enemy. Soldiers sacrifice themselves only when it comes to saving civilians or comrades. Almost all commanders recognize and correct mistakes made during hostilities. In our case of territorial defense, this is especially noticeable, because people can simply transfer to another unit if the commander turns out to be a moron who only knows how

to risk the lives of others, hide and justify herself. People of a wide variety of professions in peaceful life turn out to be talented soldiers to such an extent that it seems that they fought all their previous lives. Internal readiness for war, for sacrifice, for solidarity, for fighting brotherhood was extremely high among the Ukrainian people, and this is today an important reason for confidence in our victory.

All soldiers at the front turn to God in prayer. Not all of these prayers are traditional, many use the sniper prayer from Saving Private Ryan or pray in their own words. Cases of miraculous rescue during shelling or combat clashes become the subject of wide discussion because there are a lot of testimonies about how you managed to save yourself in a completely hopeless situation thanks to some seconds or centimeters that changed your life. The feeling of God's help allows us to fight and win, not to lose our spirit even when the enemy simply carries out a policy of genocide against the population of entire cities or creates extremely difficult conditions for us as soldiers. Whatever the circumstances around us, we do not allow despair into our own hearts but keep faith, hope, love, courage and prudence, strive for justice and a feeling of a just peace, and appreciate the beauty of every moment of life, but we cannot always be restrained. A new stage of Ukraine's spiritual revival begins in desperate, inhumane conditions. Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Catholics, and Protestants show themselves in the best way. The Protestants, who actively helped my family, were especially quick to do good. These people truly represent God's character in the midst of our trials and allow us to answer the eternal question: Where is your God? He is on the faces and in the souls of all Christians who sacrifice their time, serve their fortunes and homes, and risk their lives. Many ordinary soldiers, looking at the deeds of Christians, decide to be baptized, take communion or get married in the church. These strange sprouts of spiritual renewal make you feel Easter joy every time, even if the calendar Easter is still far away.



**24.02**

**T**o say “that it's a bad morning” is an understatement. But I decided: as long as the situation does not require my direct involvement, I will do what I had to do. I am working on an article that will be useful. Because no matter how many wise and different texts we have, if people were to leave their work during the war. Everyone has their place in this world, that's why. And if there is an opportunity to do something more than that for us, we will try to do something small. I believe in our soldiers, I pray for them. Glory to heroes!

I can no longer hear that they are ready to accept us as refugees here and there. I certainly say “thank you”. But I want to live on my own land, according to my law, with my ideas about “normality”, with my culture and language. I don't want to be a refugee in this world. From our neighbors in Europe, I expect not words, but actions that could help stop the aggression of the “mad dwarf” [Putin]. I've been waiting for more than half a day, and so far, it's in vain.

The world in the past, which was called the Commonwealth of Nations and to which we belonged, could hardly be counted among traditional Europe. Because that traditional Europe zealously and bloodily destroyed “Others”, those who prayed differently to God, dressed differently, thought differently. For our part, on the other hand, the right to be different was no less fiercely defended, even if it was violated by the powers of the other world. And still they won. After the bloody wars of the second half of the 17th century and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was an atypical Europe, became more and more similar to the rest of it, although it never

became one, paying for its otherness with its disappearance. And the evil that sank that Atlantis is still the same as it is today, we know it to the core.

Now it turned out that we speak a very close language with that of our past, unexpectedly recognizing ourselves in it today – both in accordance with the law, and in a sense of self-worth, and in self-advocacy. Again, though, at odds with the rest of Europe, which is in no hurry to defend those beautiful values that it had previously proclaimed.

No matter what happens, we will still win in the end. Because we are different in everyday life, unfortunately, we are not good at many things, in particular because of our history. But we know how to be stable and persistent when trouble comes. We learned to protect ourselves.

## 25.02

Well, my good fellows, it's already the second day that we've been holding on. And we hold on well, thanks to the heroism of our fighters and the organization of you and me.

Eternal memory of the fallen. Glory to heroes!

In fact, for those who cannot actively influence the course, it is important to look for “internal islands of normality” in a dislocated world and hold on to them. I do the usual things: I prepare, edit the text, collect files. Although, of course, it's hard as hell not to update the news feed every two minutes. But, as the former prisoner of the Nazi concentration camp said in his memoirs: “in inhumane conditions, in order to preserve oneself, one must do what one is not forced to do: brush one's teeth, read and sleep”. That's exactly what the situation does not force us to do today.

It forces solidarity. Because, as has already been proven, those societies survive where there is a sufficient number of altruists.

Ukraine is unpredictable. We had no chance on the Maidan, none at all. Mousetrap in the city center. So, praise be to those who, with inner insight, knew not to retreat anywhere.

## 27.02

Do you know why they helped us so sparingly at the beginning of the war? Because they "knew" that we were doomed. On February 23, I was sent an article printed on February 21 in the Washington Post (the author is Robert Kagan, not the last personality in American political analysis, by the way, husband of Victoria Nuland, who worked on the nuclear disarmament program of Ukraine) under the telling title "What can we expect after Putin's capture of Ukraine?"

To the author's credit, at the beginning he talks about the hypotheticality of such a perspective: "Let's assume for a moment that Vladimir Putin managed to gain complete control over Ukraine". However, he ends much more clearly: "And one last thing about Ukraine: it will most likely cease to exist as an independent entity". For Putin, who has been insisting for so long that Ukrainians are not a nation, there is no other way than to capture us. After Russia establishes a puppet regime in Ukraine, it will insist on its final incorporation into Russia. Some analysts, as the author asserts, assume that the Ukrainians will defend themselves, but full-scale resistance cannot be expected from them. Will Poland, the Baltic states and Hungary help? But will they want to help, risking the invasion of Russia on their territory?

The author talks about fundamental changes on the geopolitical map of the world, where the revival of Russian military power will take place in combination with the successes of China. The US will be forced to cede its dominance in the world to these countries. Russia would effectively control most of Eastern Europe, and China would control most of East Asia and the western Pacific. The time has come, says a well-known political analyst (google that name, if you curious), to talk about it.

Can you imagine that Ukraine, "doomed to be taken over" by Russia, would be supplied with serious weapons, risking a quarrel with a country with which it will have to share spheres of influence?

But being certain that these weapons will be captured by Russian troops?

Therefore, my friends, we disrupted a great geopolitical game that has already been played out in the minds of many politicians of the time, which is going away before our eyes. But I believe that this “new beautiful world”, thanks to Ukrainians, will be completely different from how the so-called “realistic” imagination of yesterday's politicians painted it a few days ago. Who were wrong again. And they will make mistakes again and again, if they do not say to themselves: “Russian warship, go f\* yourself”. As an ordinary Ukrainian in a truly hopeless situation said. As we all say it.

I am infinitely grateful to everyone who keeps the Sky above Ukraine. We have already changed ourselves, and therefore – we changed the world.

### 1.03

I watched some comments of Russians about the war. Not the worst Russians who feel anger, rejection and many other emotions about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But at the same time – they “don't understand, can't figure out what's going on”. I once again noticed this fundamental difference between us.

Borders are important to us – our personal borders, our home, our country, and the law that protects these borders. For us, there is no problem of understanding where one country invades the borders of another, destroys its inhabitants, destroys homes and cultural assets, forcibly forcing others to its way of life and thinking. This is called a crime and there is no alternative to it, no matter how the aggressor country motivates its invasion. But for the majority of Russians, there is no clear concept of foreign borders and foreign law, but there is a “territory” that they are able to capture and “equip” in their own image and according to their “paniatia”<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the normal world does not understand this “mysterious soul”, for which

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<sup>6</sup>e.g., “criminal code”.

there are no rules, which humanity painfully produced. That's all – the inviolability of the individual and private property; right above everyone, regardless of position; taking into account the interests of the minority through heated discussions and seeking compromises; the value of each voice and inclusion in everything that concerns you (“nothing for us without us”); electability as a sign that you yourself are the master of your life.

This is all part of our worldview, those fundamental behavioral patterns that were honed for centuries in the past, were passed on as models even when they tried to change us through hunger, extermination of culture and physical, practically “wiping out” all those who stubbornly stood guard of these worldview values. We perceive the violation of these fundamental principles of coexistence as an insult to dignity. After all, it was not for nothing that this word was key in the days of our Maidans, as the greatest value and motivation worth living.

We are not quite able to formulate for ourselves what drives us. But when we stand up, “because you can't beat children”, when we kneel, seeing off our dead on their last journey, because they will continue to hold the sky above us and lift us up when the need arises; when we rush barehanded at a tank and practically unarmed say, “Russian warship, go f\* yourself!”, this is what generations and generations behind us say, which the “liberators” with their states and armies have never been able to break.

This is something that is as clear to us “as air”, that does not need explanation or justification.

This war – is the war on worldview, because values are against chaos, because dignity is against slavish obedience, because the law is against “paniatia”<sup>7</sup>, because humanity is against the dark and terrible, which is ready to grind for the sake of asserting itself.

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<sup>7</sup> same.

Victory is inevitable. We have already won, suddenly discovering that everything is Ukraine. And not in the future, but here and now. And this is something that no longer needs proof in its non-alternative nature.

We are all Ukraine.

### 3.03

In addition, about the difference between “us” and “them”. We have all come across Russians' remarks about important events such as “politicians clashed/politicians didn't clash”, but they, ordinary people, what can they do? Can you imagine that an active Ukrainian would come up with the excuse that these are some politicians, it's not him? And these are not officials whom we elect and who are responsible for us, but some illusory “politicians”? Our “politicians” know what tires under Office of the President of Ukraine and a vast majority of people are suspicious of “social contracts”.

The Russians complain that “theirs” is not like “ours”, that they are beaten harder. But we are not the ones who stand peacefully and take pictures when the security forces arrest the old blockader. It was with your support and approval that an authoritarian regime was introduced. And it is you, not “politicians”, who are killing Ukrainians and destroying Ukraine.

I read a book called “Appeal of Slavists – the Historians and Philologists to the Government of Russia”<sup>8</sup>. And what have I to say? Only that all these letters “against the war” on behalf of Russian Slavists and cyclists are written for the Slavists and cyclists themselves. I suspect that for some they have a certain psychotherapeutic effect – feat according to the schedule, others have quite pragmatic considerations. Look, and the west will pity the sufferers. And he will regret it, and he will not disconnect from Swift, so that grandmothers and those who “disagree” do not suffer. Even if the price for this so-called pity for grandmothers is the life of Ukrainians.

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<sup>8</sup> Russian: “Obrashchenye slavystov – ystorykov y fylolohov k pravytelstvu Rossyy”.

And it seems that there are correct words in this petition: “our country started this war – Russia, whose troops suddenly invaded the territory of the sovereign and independent state of Ukraine” and “We express support for the sovereignty of Ukraine and the right of its people to determine their own destiny”. But inside – all the rhetoric that caused this war. And among the signatories, let's say, Kirill Kochegarov, a historian dealing with the problems of the 17th century, at the same time the author of the “methodological manual”<sup>9</sup> written in 2014 – “Crimea in Russian History”<sup>10</sup>. This “aid” was recommended for preparation for a lesson on patriotism, which “was designed to emphasize the validity of the reunification of Russia and Crimea from the point of view of international law, moral and ethical norms”. Reconsidered? I don't believe.

See excerpts of this letter.

“They [armed conflicts] provide fertile ground for the formation of negative stereotypes, which for decades complicate good-neighboring relations. There are many such examples in European history, and now, to our great regret, they will be replenished with a negative image of Russia in the minds of not only the Ukrainian people close to us, but also of all Slavic countries!”

It seems that until February 24, 2022, Russia had an “unsullied good-neighbourly image”, but now the “conflict” has spoiled the picture. There was no Crimea and Ilovaisk, there was no passenger “Boeing” shot down by a Buk bought at a war market, there were no 14 thousand Ukrainians killed and about two million who lost their homes. These are trifles against the background of good neighbourly relations.

According to representatives of this “Russian conscience”, the war will cement “in the public consciousness of many countries the image of our country not as a leading world power and guarantor of global stability, but as a violator of international law”.

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<sup>9</sup> Russian: “metodycheskoe posobie”.

<sup>10</sup> Russian: “Krym v istorii Rossii”.

Russia as a guarantor of global stability is very strong, there are no words!

“The war, among other things, will cause and is already causing irreparable damage to Russia's scientific and cultural ties with the Slavic countries, erases the memory of our country as the liberator of the Slavs from the Ottoman rule and the German-fascist dictatorship. The war will lead to the final displacement of the Russian language from the Ukrainian cultural space”.

After that, I want to say one thing – may you burn in hell, together with your culture and historical memory, which formed and are forming a nation of murderers with an inflated “ego” of a superpower. This war was declared not by Putin, but by the Russians, declared to all Ukrainians – dead, alive and unborn, a war to destroy our nation, its past, present and future. So, “follow your ship” with your petitions and signatures to these “mass graves”.

Only a personal publicly expressed position will be counted. Terrible? Isn't it scary to kill? And those who are killed are not afraid?

In December 2010, at an important meeting in Warsaw, where the prospects for the democratization of Russia were discussed in connection with President Medvedev's statements about the need to condemn Stalin's crimes, the Russian Yuri Afanasyev literally shouted in response to the optimism of the speakers present: “Don't believe a single word. This is a country with a misanthropic ideology and remains so”. He gave the example of a pseudo-documentary, which had just appeared at the time, “Kill the Russian in Yourself”, which was broadcast on all channels at the most favorable time for viewers. The meaning of this film was reduced to the fact that there is only one people – “Russian”, and those who declare themselves Ukrainian – kill the “Russian” in themselves, which means a person, because only a “Russian is a person”. Then – a movie, today – they kill Ukrainians, because they are not people, they are fascists.



Let's believe Yuri Afanasiev, a historian and politician, who knew what he was talking about. History has confirmed this.

### 3.03

At 14, I also heard cries that Russian mothers are a pity, and that it is impossible to dehumanize the enemy. And I felt sorry for our mothers, who did not wait for their children from this cursed war, and children who will grow up without parents. And I also felt sorry for all the beautiful unborn Ukrainians, and I had no doubt that they would be beautiful, because we were losing the best. Now we have this enemy in our towns and villages. And I do not feel sorry for the boys who came to kill Ukrainians, who were sent to deprive us all of our identity, our past and our future. Each of them has a choice – to kill or not to kill, they made their choice – to deprive us of any choice. So yes, no regrets.

### 10.03

Yesterday, a bomb was dropped on the village of Piskivka, where we have a house, and a twenty-year-old girl was killed. Many wounded. Piskivka is not a strategic object for the Russians. We were happy that our relatives and neighbours were safe, because we were on the sidelines of the war. It turned out not. We are being destroyed only because we are Ukrainians. And at this time, the German PEN<sup>11</sup> says that Russian soldiers are as many victims of war as those whom they destroy. I really want all these liberals to see the blood on their hands and live with it, with the feeling of blood on their hands, until death.

### 11.03

In the discussions of the last few days with Western colleagues, who almost from the first days of the war began to call – to remember the “other Russia”, not to apply the principle of collective responsibility, to refrain from symbolic gestures of negation in relation to Russian culture – she clearly formulated her opinion for

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<sup>11</sup> PEN centres is a worldwide association of writers, founded in London in 1921.

herself. The signature of any Russian under a letter against the war cannot serve as an absolution. Because the feeling of guilt – due to belonging to the people who are carrying out genocide in Ukraine – should be a normal reaction of every Russian, in particular such a signatory. The signature is not an indulgence, especially since among the signatories there are quite a number of those who gladly welcomed “*Krym nash (Crimea is Ours)*” a few years earlier, and those who gladly support Russian megalomania. Lack of guilt is just an additional pebble on the “guilty” straw. Instead, I come across remarks by Russians, not even the “righteous signatories”, about how dangerous it is for Russians to oppose Putin's policies, that there is no fault in this policy of individual Russians who did not support it (usually only those who did not vote for Putin in the elections), after all, Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine are as much victims of the regime as Ukrainians. “I want to say that the Russians are the same party that suffered in this war as the Ukrainians. And no, I don't need to say that they suffered in a different way”, – this is how one of the representatives of the “other Russia” begins her post. This relativization of the victim and the aggressor is striking, but only to us who see this situation from the inside. It is obvious to us: if you are not guilty, then did you renounce your Russian citizenship after 2014? Are you in jail for your stance? Were you detained and how many times at rallies and personal pickets in 2014, 2015, 2016 and so on until 2022?

Our honest and simple questions, however, do not seem so immediately beyond the western border of Ukraine. I checked it with my good colleagues who, since the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014, interpreted it in the appropriate categories and transferred money for the needs of our army and the victims of the aggression. Who responded with letters of solidarity from the first hours of the invasion of Russian troops on February 24. The answer to my simple questions, however, was silence, or another long and wise explanation. In the end, desperate: “I'm sorry, I probably

shouldn't say this to a person who is in danger". That is, the appeal is not to arguments, but to the not fully balanced state of a person in a difficult situation. My words about the need for symbolic gestures, so important for Ukrainians, were eventually mentioned by a Polish colleague in his conversation with a journalist, but as false.

So, in a symbolic sense, have we lost? So far, in my opinion, only our direct attempt has choked. It is necessary, therefore, to learn lessons. The first consists in establishing the opinion at various levels that there is no purely "Ukrainian" side in this war. Russia has violated the entire international system of agreements that supported European security after the Second World War, and those fundamental values that lie at the heart of European culture. That is, Europe does not defend Ukrainians, but primarily itself.

The second lesson should be to realize the realism of our demands. No, I am not suggesting that they should not be voiced. Although one must also understand the risks of being isolated. What we can certainly demand today is to provide opportunities for a wider sounding of our voice: expanding the field of Ukrainian studies in Western universities, translating Ukrainian books with our vision of the past and present, increasing our presence in the Western world. For us, however, this will not be a privilege, but a great challenge, for which we will have to work seriously. We should already think about this.

### **11.03**

Zbigniew Herbert wrote this poem under the influence of the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981. It was sent to me today by the Polish historian and diplomat Henryk Litvin, who was struck by some parallels with today's day in Ukraine. The Poles, wrote the author of the letter, are already looking at the former siege and depressed state of the "chronicler" from the heights of time, knowing that everything turned out for the best. The former ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Ukraine says: "I have a lasting and

unchanging conviction that you in Kyiv will very soon look at the past "siege" in the same way. With more pain than Herbert, but also with more pride than modern Poles".

At my request, Maksym Strikha translated Herbert's poem from Polish to Ukrainian.

Zbigniew Herbert

(1924–1998)

Report from the besieged city

I am too old to bear arms and fight side by side with others –

out of grace, I have been assigned the secondary role of chronicler

I am writing down – I don't know for whom – the history of the  
siege

I have to be precise, but I don't know when the invasion started  
two hundred years ago, in December, in September, or maybe  
yesterday at dawn

everyone here suffers from a loss of sense of time

all we have left is devotion to place

we still protect the ruins of temples, ghost gardens and houses

if we lose the ruins, nothing will be left

I write as I can, in the rhythm of endless weeks

Monday: the shops are empty, the rat has become a currency

Tuesday: the burgomaster was killed by unknown persons

Wednesday: ceasefire talks, enemy interned delegation

we do not know their location, that is, the place of execution

Thursday: after a stormy meeting, the demand for unconditional  
surrender was rejected by a majority of votes

Friday: the plague began

Saturday: N.N, an indomitable fighter, committed suicide

Sunday: there was no water, we repelled the assault on the  
eastern gate, which is called the Gate of the Covenant

I know that all this is monotonous, it will not move anyone

I avoid comments, restrain my emotions, write about facts  
apparently, only they are valued in foreign markets  
but with a certain amount of pride I want to let the world know  
that thanks to the war we raised a new breed of children  
our children do not like fairy tales, they play murder  
awake and in sleep they dream of bread, soup and bones  
just like dogs and cats  
in the evening I like to wander around the outskirts of the City  
along the borders of our threatened freedom  
I look down at the crowds of soldiers, at their fires  
I hear drums, barbaric shouts  
it's really unclear how the City is still defending itself  
the siege lasts a long time, the enemies must change  
nothing binds them except the desire to exterminate us  
Goths, Tatars, Imperial Preobrazhensky regiments  
who will count them  
the colors of the flags change like a forest on the horizon  
from delicate bird yellow in spring through green in June to  
winter black  
then in the evening, freed from the facts, I can think  
about distant ancient things, for example about our allies across  
the ocean,  
I know they truly sympathize  
they send sacks of flour, fats and good advice  
they don't even know that their parents betrayed us  
his former allies during the Second Apocalypse  
the sons are blameless, they deserve thanks, so we are grateful  
they did not survive sieges lasting forever  
the unfortunate are always alone  
defenders of the Dalai Lama, Kurds, Afghan highlanders  
now, as I write these words, the supporters of the accord  
gained a certain advantage over the indomitable party

usual mood swings, fate still weighs everything on the scales  
cemeteries are growing, defenders are decreasing  
but the defense continues and will continue until the end  
and if the City falls and one heals  
he will carry the City in himself by the ways of exile  
he will be the City  
we look in the face of hunger, in the face of fire, in the face of death  
the worst – in the face of betrayal  
and only our dreams remain unconquered.

### 15.03

Ukraine offers ordinary Europeans a mirror where they can see themselves from the best side. So that they remember themselves in such a way that they can be proud of it in the future.

My Polish friend writes: “I will say something atypical: I don't have the best opinion about the Polish people, but such situations force me to change my opinion”.

His family takes care of several refugees from Zaporozhye. An elderly lady needed a serious visit to the dentist. An expensive private dentist volunteered his time and said he would do everything for free. The younger one needed a computer for work – it was also obtained without problems. “In difficult moments”, says my friend, “we manage to rise”.

Another Polish friend of mine writes that she is amazed at how our people take out and take out their pets in terrible conditions. “We wouldn't have been able to do that”, she sums up.

Ukrainians, fighting for themselves and Ukraine, are simultaneously changing the world, making it better and more humane. Giving others the opportunity to remember the best in themselves.

### 17.03

Why am I not leaving Kyiv? To Warsaw or Krakow, where I could work? To fully work in beautiful libraries, completing your

unfinished books? I could not answer myself even yesterday, because it is irrational. Today I can. I want to be among my own, who not only love what I love, who not only hurt everything that hurts me. But we can feel together what others will not feel – our hatred. It is probably easier to be united in love, much more painful and difficult – to share the hatred of another. This unconditional hatred for the killer of your children, your parents, your friends, your Ukraine. And this non-sharing of your hatred by those who do not belong to your community will sound like treason to you, like an excuse for a murderer. Therefore, I will stay in Kyiv with my unfinished books, writhing in pain and hatred, which they cannot share.

**24.02**

**I** rode around the city all day. I've been on air at Your Day. Later I went to Chernihiv. When I came back, felt the situation with my own skin. There is no panic. There are no roadblocks. Rather, they are, but our guys kindly check the documents and let people go in different directions. At least for now. The first wave of "panickers" left (some only made it to Zhytomyr because of terrible traffic jams). There are those whose nerves and psyche are in order. Tomorrow I will visit my friends again to reassure and help. There are almost no queues at gas stations. The first wave of panic subsided. I will stay in Kyiv until the end. I will help as much as I can. Fuck "him"<sup>12</sup>, not Ukraine. I kiss you all.

**26.02**

I finally have the most restful night today. Got some sleep. I took all the women and children of my friends out of Kyiv. It became calm. Only those who are in order with their nerves and analytics should stay in Kyiv. I go on the air, give comments and charge with a smile. If you need any help, write in private.

P.S. Not such a terrible devil as he is portrayed. I kiss you all.

**28.02**

The whole world is changing. And we are in the epicenter. We change it. This is fantastic. We, a small but brave and proud nation, forced everyone to decide whose side they were on – good or evil, evolution or degradation. We woke up ourselves and forced the whole world to wake up. We introduce values. Irreversible processes

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<sup>12</sup> Putin.



are underway. Every day spent in this war is unforgettable and in itself is a turning point. We have to stand and win. There is no way back. We have already endured. And we will win. I feel it because I believe it!

**28.02**

I just had a conversation with a person whom I trust, he confirms what is officially published on the website of the Armed Forces of Ukraine – help is going to Kyiv, has gone, arrived (I am writing in a veiled manner). You can guess from where it is. For the people of Kyiv, this is very important for raising morale. Fuck you, “dwarf”<sup>13</sup>, not Kyiv! You haven't seen the real people of Bandera yet! You have no idea who you're dealing with, moron! Your entire empire is hated on a genetic level! You have crossed the line beyond which – is your death. And the death of your stupid empire!

Glory to Ukraine!

**28.02**

Dear friends from Poland.

You know me personally and we saw each other more than once in Poland at the concerts of my band Kozak System, which we played in your country over a hundred times. I want you to hear the truth firsthand. We have a war. Putin and his army attacked my homeland, Ukraine. The Ukrainian army and the people defend themselves like lions. The enemy is shelling our cities with heavy artillery: Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Berdyansk and hundreds of border cities. The enemy wants to take Kyiv. Bloody battles are taking place on the outskirts of Kyiv. Defenders defend to the last breath our Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, Vasylkiv, Ivankov and Vyshgorod. Every Ukrainian took up arms. Look, I'm a musician – and today I'm holding a gun. Could anyone believe it a few days ago? I am asking you to share this news and pass this information on to the Polish media. Help us as much as you can. I know that a lot of help from

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<sup>13</sup> Same.

Poland has already reached Ukraine. Thank you very much for that. My fellow countrymen became warriors with the greatest evil in the world – the Moscow Empire. Muscovite hates everything human and civilized. Russia also hates your country; you know it from your own history. Help us to defeat this Evil Empire. Share this information with all your friends and journalists. Please share this post, tag Polish media and journalists, let the world know the TRUTH.

Glory to Ukraine!

### 2.03

If you re-watch all the videos with captive “Rashists”<sup>14</sup>, you can draw the following conclusion: they came to liberate us from ourselves. Aliens. Nothing, we are already at the stage of freeing “you” from your own self!

11:54

For those who worry about Kyiv. This is what Khreschatyk looks like now. Life goes on in Kyiv. Shops are open, supermarkets too. There are small queues. There are regular buses. Cars are driving around. Volunteers are engaged in their work. Teroborona<sup>15</sup> at checkpoints too. The city is barricaded. Anyone who was on the Maidan will understand that only now all of Kyiv is like the Maidan itself. People are calm and balanced. Everyone does what they are efficient at. Many volunteers came. If people in other cities stop the invaders with their bare hands and turn them back, then Kyiv is armed and angry. Ready for defense. All the news that you read from reliable sources says that our Armed Forces are giving the enemy such a hard time that most of the Russians refuse to fight. IT-specialists joined the battle like gods – their work is priceless. Every day help arrives from Europe. Yesterday I was present at the conversation of military professionals who went through DAP<sup>16</sup> and

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<sup>14</sup> Here, wordplay; Russian + racist = Rashists (meaning, soldiers and supporters of war).

<sup>15</sup> Ukrainian: Territorial defense – Ukraine Military Forces civil auxiliary.

<sup>16</sup> Ukrainian: DAP.

the war in the east, their mood is optimistic. And they know more than we do. In a word, fuck “him”, not Ukraine. I kiss everyone.

### 5.03

Good morning from Kyiv.

The night passed romantically under the cannonade snoring of beautiful Cossacks and Cossacks with whom I patrol the streets of Kyiv. Well, nothing, I hope the hearing will be restored after the victory, by May 18, the anniversary concert of Kozak System.

### 6.03

Day 11 is over. I think the time of adaptation has passed. The body was reformatted. Someone wise said: “If you want to know life, then stop believing what they say or write. Become someone who does what they talk about and write about”. Good night.

### 7.03

Good morning to all of us.

On the 12th day, from what I saw, heard and felt, the following thoughts formed:

War is not a contest for the best heroism. Heroes are all those who became part of the war from the first day of the war. Each of us is already a part of a heroic story. During the war, the country is divided into front and rear. The front is a smaller part of society, the rear is larger. The front is combat, it is the extreme sharpening of consciousness and very specific behavior. In the rear, you don't need to behave the same way as at the front! (remember this for security guards at document check posts). The rear is, first of all, routine, self-organization, planning, and the cold-blooded formation of a reserve based on the principle of “everyone in his place”. As a military professional with the nickname “Bear” told me, I quote: friend, remember: 99 % of war is everyday life and mud. There is no front without the rear, because helping the front is everyday, but vitally necessary. The war provokes the reflex “to do something urgently”. That's why it's important not just something – but something

specific! For example, before carrying water or food somewhere, you need to find out specifically where it is needed right now. We purposefully find out any need! There are volunteer staff for this. We interact with them.

Next, let's stop blaming those men who are not at the front! Military psychologists claim that gender claims and floggings multiply the guilt syndrome, which undermines morale. This is not the Middle Ages. Not all men can shoot. When they gave me a submachine gun and a pistol, a friend with the call sign "Cuckoo" joked (military humor) that he didn't need a pistol, well, except to shoot himself. The needs of the front are exclusively qualification-based!

The key concept is RESERVE. Now the first and most professional wave is engaged at the front. There are professionals. There are monsters. But the stability of the country lies in the presence of a reserve! This reserve is now volunteering, unloading trucks, doing logistics or just working, waiting for its time "to take the weapon". THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE!

War is a collective phenomenon. A feeling of collectiveness, a feeling of "we are all one", saves us from natural fear, and we should not be ashamed of it. Therefore, it is most difficult for creative people, non-conformists, charismatics, thinkers, individualists, "people not of this world", people of culture, intellectual theoreticians. They do not fit into a rough time, because they have resistance to mass thinking. They are empaths who experience other people's pain as their own. This is their gift and punishment. This is the highest form of intelligence and ethics. But it is these people who in the future will create a heroic victorious cultural epic for the entire nation, which will be eternal! This is our cultural legion, which will create an invaluable humanitarian legacy of the new reality. Weapons in their hands are needed only for self-defense. But a pen, a camera, brushes or a microphone are their effective weapons. Let them do their job. Finally, even those who left also help. So? DO NOT DISTURB.

And finally, war is love. Strangely and paradoxically, war is love. To life, to humanity, to native people, to a cat, to a country, to a warrior, to a stranger with a blue and yellow ribbon, to language... Hatred of the enemy is proportional to love for one's family. This is also a weapon. Let the insane Love for our natives hold our high bar, because it is precisely with it that we differ from the enemy.

Have a fruitful day everyone. I hugged everyone.

### 8.03

Good morning, friends.

For those who missed their native streets of Kyiv. I would show you what my hometown looks like now, but unfortunately, I can't. If you shoot something on video in civilian clothes, you fall under the suspicion of the security forces. If you are in uniform and armed, the danger is even greater – suddenly you are a saboteur in disguise. Safety rules during wartime. You have to get used to it. bear with me See for yourself after the victory. Kyiv is fine. Yesterday, two enemy planes wanted to “photograph” the capital – they didn't make it. Or only their pieces flew by. Well, they asked me not to take pictures.

### 9.03

Good morning, everyone. 14th day of the war. I will try to voice and answer the questions that many people asked me yesterday.

After analyzing everything that I personally saw and heard:

1) stay in Kyiv or leave?

If you are ready for street battles, ready to live without light and communication, have food supplies and proper weapons, and most importantly experience – stay! If not, ask the people of Kharkiv what to do.

2) Is it safe to stay in the suburbs?

Depending on which and for what purpose (see answer 1).

3) Is it possible to leave the station by train?

It is possible, but not in all directions.

4) Are there traffic jams on the Odesa highway?

It was not yesterday, there is a crowd at the entrance and exit from Kyiv. The evacuation peak has passed.

5) Is it safe to travel in other directions?

Nothing is safe during the war, everything is relative safety – Zhytomyr no, Vyzhhorod no, Kovel no, Obuhiv yes, Bila Tserkva yes.

6) Is it possible to take children, women, elderly people out of the shelling zones?

If the Armed Forces allows. This is exclusively their area of responsibility. We are not allowed there.

7) Will there be an assault on Kyiv?

Only “hu@lo”<sup>17</sup> knows the answer.

8) What will this assault be like? Dropping bombs, breaking through in one direction or surrounding in a ring?

The military has a difference of opinion here, but why do you need to know that (see answer 1).

9) Will Kyiv survive?

“Persevere, but there will be a cutthroat” – this is verbatim from the majority of the military. And they are ready for it.

Now the main thing is that NO ONE will give guarantees to anyone in anything during the war. Rely on your own experience, intuition, analysis and capabilities. Any decision is YOUR choice between ideal and possible.

It is necessary to act on prejudices and make decisions without hesitation.

So, while I was writing the post, I received a message from a friend from Chernihiv “at 4:25 the light and water disappeared”.

### 10.03

Good morning on the 15th. We all continue to adapt to new realities. Last night I got into a fight with a few of my friends. Those

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<sup>17</sup> Putin.

who are not in the epicenter of the events, read this post, it will increase your empathy for the refugees. Those who, thank God, are not yet in the epicenter, also read it, it will increase your sense of reality, because some of you have not yet understood that there is a war, and events must be predicted in advance. And prepare ahead of time. Those who think that everything can be solved with money or connections, read this too, it will reduce your pride and the understanding that there is nothing special during war<sup>18</sup>. All levels are in danger. Yes, I'm a little angry, but I have to tell you this. Empathy, respect, compassion, delicacy, mutual assistance, humanity – these are the weapons with which we will win this war. The enemy does not have such a weapon! I hugged everyone.

### 12.03

17th morning.

We have already learned a lot. Every new day brings new knowledge, because when you are among the military, it is much easier to understand what and how is happening. The military knows the nuances and reads the course of events. But the further you go, the fewer opportunities to say something to you, because almost everything is taboo. Even on Facebook, the enemy chats. My post with the cat yesterday was banned. Ukrainian cats are dangerous. Any information or photo from the video can be used by the enemy. This is not an exaggeration. Unfortunately, there are enough idiots working for the enemy in our rear. Here is one of the operational messages: They fired at the block post on Shulyavka, there is an orientation that they are moving in your direction. Volkswagen, blue T-4.... And there are several such messages per day in the closed operational chat, and this is only in Kyiv. That is why the guards at the checkpoints are so meticulous and “in a platoon”. The enemy steals patrol cars, disguises himself, forges documents, hides himself with children, throws grenades from the

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<sup>18</sup> Means: “no people are special”.

windows of cars and other “wildness” that enemy is capable of. So be careful and don't put yourself in danger again. Have a good day everyone. We will definitely win, it's just a matter of time and our unity.

### 12.03

Dear friends, those who know me, listen! If you live in the Kyiv or Chernihiv regions, and your house or cottage is several kilometers from the battle line, you are taking an incredible risk by staying at home. The front line can fluctuate. And our valiant Armed Forces, though Gods, are not magicians. This is war. By staying, you risk your life and those everyday amenities that the occupiers will take away from you in case of occupation. After two or three days without light, water and food, you will start crying for help, but even then, only the God Lord will be able to really help you. There are no such services in the war that could get into the occupier's lair, find you without contacting you, and take you out of the shelling. Relying on the humanity of “orcs”<sup>19</sup> is tantamount to stupidity. Don't wait for the “green corridor”. Think about yourself! Do not play roulette with your own life! I ask you!

### 13.03

Good morning, Invincibles.

There will be a psychological swing for sure. The emotional state will fluctuate in amplitude from despair to euphoria. Values will change. The only thing that will not change is the arrival of spring. It already smells like it in the forest. Crows spoil the idyll – “only a crow on a pine tree won a sad song”. Or maybe I didn't understand, and it wanted to warn me about something? What about? But I myself know what it is about. There was a rumble behind the forest, and the crow flew away. got scared Well, because the war...

Day 18.

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<sup>19</sup> Russians.



### 14.03

Good morning, everyone.

The first and only time in my life I encountered such a situation 20 years ago. In Germany. Kader Kesek, a German producer, Turkish by origin, worked with us at that time, or rather trained. Then, for the first time, we started playing with a playback and a metronome on his instructions. The point is simple, each of us had some musical parts pre-recorded in the studio in our headphones, which were synchronized with the beats of the metronome. The sound of the metronome was heard only by us in headphones, the listeners in the hall did not hear it, but the sound of the playback together with our instruments was heard. Why was it dangerous for us? The fact that we simply had no right to fly out of the rhythm or form of the song. No chance for error. No compromise. At first it was very scary. Then we got used to it. And now we have a similar situation – no chance for error. Only victory. Fear always seeks compromises. Courage will and confidence are not looking for anything. They find only victory. I stop counting the days of war. That's it, we're on stage. The song is started. We started playing with the metronome of war, which means approaching the coda, the finale of our joint song. "We Are the Champions, my friends.

Cause we are the champions of the World".

### 14.03

Let's do it. I don't care who, and how, manifests himself behind the threshold. Their "heroism" is not our case. I'm not going to become an expert on all kinds of shit. You see, we should never be interested in who is saying what, doing what, and so on. Died Concrete wall for ages + air defense. There is a black hole. There are zombies. Let's focus on how my personal day went. What did I do, and was I tired in the evening? I am sure that each of you is tired. And he did a lot. This is great. So, everything is according to plan. The Russian measure is on its way. The route is clear. Let's sleep

peacefully. We are gaining strength. We brush our teeth, weapons, karma. We sing a lullaby to children. Let's call relatives. We are preparing for tomorrow. Good night.

### 15.03

Good morning, everyone. Scientists consider the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv to be the “key” to the study of the history of Ukraine, the formation of the traditions of Ukrainian statehood, language and culture. Vyacheslav Kornienko, doctor of historical sciences, has been researching the graffiti of the Saint Sophia Cathedral of Kyiv since 2006. He claims that more than 7,000 of them have been found today. The results of the research allowed the scientist to “show with specific examples that the spoken language of ancient Ukraine was precisely the Old Ukrainian language. The inscriptions are dated on the basis of paleographic signs – each period corresponded to certain forms of writing letters”. Kyiv stands. The cathedral is standing. Sunny and beautiful. And he says – enough selfies, Cossacks. Move away, because you are blocking my view of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, who is gesturing in the direction of the Russian ship.

### 16.03

Good morning, everyone.

Kyiv and the region will be quarantined for two days. No one can be on the street. To no one Why such strict measures? The occupiers realized that they could not take Kyiv. Under Vorzel, Bucha, Irpin, Makarov, Stoyanka, and Myla, our people give them such respect that they can only be described with the phrase “we invite you to hell”. And that's great. Instead, they are trying to undermine the capital from within. Read here and you will understand everything. And these are not scarecrows. Three days ago, I was personally present at the arrest of such a “sweet pensioner”, who has a whole coordination center at home, where her entire community is waiting for the liberators, adjusts the fire, accommodates

guests, and similar crap. So be careful, and if you see any suspicious person, notify the Teroborona or the police.

### **16.03**

I saw in the rear-view mirror the eyes of a grandfather who had no house left. And there was no village left. He was silent all the way and stared into the void. I saw the eyes of a girl who, together with her mother, was miraculously taken out of hell to a safe place. She kept asking her mother where we were going. Mom was silent and cried. I saw the look of a warrior who lost two comrades in the battles near Bucha an hour ago. The face is tanned. He smoked and was silent. I saw the look of the grandmother who did not want to evacuate and remained under fire. She stood on the gate, seeing off her relatives. And she was silent. I saw the silent look of a watchwoman who accidentally went to Kyiv for a shift, and in the meantime, the occupiers entered her native village, and all her relatives fell into a trap. Now she wants to join them to die together. I saw the look of a dog who was sheltered in a bomb shelter, and she has been living there for 20 days without understanding what is happening. Stalks among the military almost without reflexes. I saw the tears of joy of a volunteer who had just been able to find life-saving medicine. Found, found! – she shouted. I let the boy hold the machine gun, and I saw his look. I saw it all with my own eyes. And I will never forget all this. A view of war. You occupiers are finished. You have forced us, one of the kindest nations, to become evil. We'll get through it all, because that's who we are. And whoever of you survives will never be forgiven by us. Never. We will find it in every corner of the earth. How Mossad deals with fascists. And we are waiting for tears of joy from the victory.

To work!

### **18.03**

Do you know why we all disliked planting and harvesting potatoes so much? Because for us young and modern teenagers it

was a boring, endless and senseless process. But it is necessary, because grandma and grandpa will be cursed. It is impossible to refuse. And so you go out into the boundless field. You take the first potato. The first lines are like the first phrases in writing a novel. There is no end or edge in sight. And you slowly fall into a trance, and crawl like a mad ox to the victorious horizon. Moreover, you will crawl with cancer. And in this trance, you finally reach the finale. Tired and happy. Why am I? On the 23rd day of the war, we wake up and grab our phones with the hope of seeing the victorious final on the news. We read each line. I freeze and then the grandfather shouts – Ivaska, it's enough to sit on the phone. Take a slash and dig, because now it's a bucket! Good morning.

### 18.03

Russia is starting a full-scale war with Ukraine over Ukraine's intentions to become part of the EU and NATO. The occupiers are completely destroying our cities and villages, killing everyone without exception. The entire Ukrainian people stands up for the defense of their country. The Armed Forces and all power structures are defending so heroically that the whole world admires them. A third of the enemy's army is destroyed. The occupier understood who he was dealing with, was embarrassed and demoralized. Our military leadership shows miracles of military tactics and is ready to switch from defense to offensive.

And here, on the 23rd day of the war: “the chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Ruslan Stefanchuk, allowed the possibility of changing the Constitution in the part of the movement towards NATO against the background of negotiations with Russia”. Dear Mr. Stefanchuk, don't make any more such concessions. The word is not a sparrow, let it out – you will not hide. Don't annoy the people. And nerves are like strings. You don't need to grope us, we have armored vehicles of the fourth level of protection. If this is some specific diplomatic tactic, then you blink, we will understand.

### 19.03

Good morning, everyone.

For those who can't sleep at night, reread Vasyl Shklyar's novels "Troscha", "Black Raven", "Nostalgia", "Character".

Everything that we are experiencing now was already in our history. We were destined to complete all this.

– A chicken, a turkey, a cat, a pig, a goat have the right to be funny, but not a man. Both in trouble and in good times, life will still flow like water. But happiness and wealth will disappear, and shame will remain forever. Either shame or honor.

– Old-age Europe loved to talk about democracy and human rights but broke out in a cold sweat when they reminded her of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

– But if you look at a person for a long time, he will definitely feel that look. Our gaze is more piercing than a scream.

– I'm gone, I'm killed, but God still gave me time for the war, so there's no need to fear anything – when I fall, I'll return to where I came from. That's all.

– Because those who immediately agree with everything, promise, shine their teeth at you – will never do a damn thing. They will say: sorry, it didn't work out. How stubborn? At first, they resist, bend over, then get angry, then seethe with anger and hatred, and then look – everything is done. And when it is done, they start to rejoice like children. Because what worked, worked out...

– Just remember, son, my science: if you happen to be dealing with a Muscovite, never, never believe him. Especially watch out for him when you have a holiday, a funeral, when you least expect his attack. Be most vigilant when Muscovite offers appeasement. Then don't doze off, then he will definitely attack...

– Was there anywhere in the world at least one occupier who came to someone else's land to do good? Thank you for the science, Master Vasyl Shkliar.

### 20.03

I will tell you a story. When the war began in the east, we, Antin Mukharskyi, sisters Telnyuk, Taras Kompanichenko, Sashko Lirnyk, Igor Didkovskii, Oksana Stebelska, brothers Kapranov, Oleg Skrypka, Volodya Sherstyuk, gathered a press conference at which we formed and read our appeal to the president – to close the cultural space of Ukraine from the “culture” of the occupier. Because Russian songs are followed by a Russian tank. We were not heard and supported then. And each of us experienced serious restrictions in the public promotion of our creativity. Schuster Savik, who always hears when it smells fried, made a separate program on this matter. I invited the Kapranov brothers and Ira Vannikova to defend our position, and on the other hand, Savik invited Vadim Rabinovich from OPZZh and some other collaborator, I can't remember. Rubilovo was not easy. Rabinovich, I remember then, scornfully asked – what are you going to ban Cheburashka? What did he (she) do to you? To which I replied – there is a war in my country, and there is a war in your country? He stopped for a moment because he was on a stretch. If he says yes, the electorate will not understand, he cannot say no, because the war is still going on. And after the broadcast, he came up to me and was so eager – young man, are you being sincere? Don't you like the Russian measure? Who is behind you? What time do you work? Is it really free? I say – yes absolutely. I hate My conscience stands behind me, and you, I say, a corrupt and cynical bastard. He turned around, smiled and looked over his shoulder – you will go far, you will not fall if you look.

It finally happened, only OPZZh fell, not me. And you, Vadim Zinovievitch, are a fucking idiot.

### 21.03

During the war, being among the military is probably the most interesting thing. Why? Because they read the course of the war. They were taught this. Plus intuition. They will not lose their temper at all. And they don't guess on maps. And Arestovych is not listened

to. They know. And they do. Calmly. The only thing that can excite them is another portion of various “goodies”. They are maniacally happy when they get an extra set of cartridges, grenades, night vision devices, machine gun belts, machine guns, American helmets, armored cars and so on. This is how a prudent mother of many children makes vegetable twists for the winter. When winter is ahead, there can never be too much food. When there is a war, there are never too many weapons. And all my new friends, like hamsters, stuff their cheeks with this goodness, and are happy like children. This is so cute. And they are also fetishists in the good sense of the word, and aesthetes. Some of them look like gods. You look, observe and think – how cool it is. Ukraine is a country whose soldiers the whole world will be proud of. Already proud. Respect. Huge respect. And gratitude.

### **22.03**

Not good morning, friends.

I was at the remnants of Retroville yesterday. And he was at the place where the rocket fell on the Windy Mountains. I cannot describe this horror to you in words. I will not show the video for obvious reasons. I don't understand why people are so stupid. One bad guy destroyed half of the neighborhood with one photo. Specially or not – what's the difference. No words. In order to give a short interview to one of the journalists or join the broadcast, I look for a special place so that nothing is visible in the background. Stupid wall or tree, that's all. And people shoot whatever they want. And teach in net. And then he flies. Because orcs are stupid, but not stupid enough not to take advantage of such gifts. Here, the guys on the night watch almost shoot shooting stars, because they mistake them for an enemy drone, and people take selfies. Because it's interesting. Now again for a day strict quarantine. And this means that not a single van with humanitarian aid or provisions will arrive in Kyiv within a day. And not a single car will take evacuated people from hot spots near Kyiv. And it will become even more difficult for everyone. Not such a terrible enemy as your own idiots. May God forgive.

### 23.03

Good morning. There is such a phrase, not very melodious, but folk creativity is not always melodious – “the lice of the occupier are not as terrible as their own nits”. People have many weapons in their hands. It is almost impossible to control who got it and how. For this, in particular, curfew is introduced. Because any person in camouflage, with a machine gun and a blue ribbon is identified as his own. But there are exceptions. A kind of company with fake Teroborana cards is gathering, setting up a block post, and giving nightmares to poor and war-frightened people who leave villages occupied by orcs in cars. It is clear that people take away what is most valuable. And the scumbags understand it. And they use it. We have repeatedly received calls from victims. And yesterday, there were fewer “heroes” by one. Therefore, know that if suddenly at one of the roadblocks they pick you up, behave inappropriately, or demand money or something else, immediately call the patrol police. Just instantly. You clearly indicate the place of your location, and in 5 minutes these nits will lie with their faces in the asphalt.

### 24.03

In principle, we have entered the stage of war, which was predicted by those who know about the military topic. The stage is called – routine. Provision, volunteer, escorts, block posts, searching for everything for everyone, nerves, fatigue, lack of light at the end of the tunnel, 5 likes under the post “drop on medicine, car, drone, dog food...”, betrayal, victory, treason, victory, “we were the first to enter Irpin – no, we were the first to enter”, Shoigu died, Putin laughed, nuclear bomb, nato scit, well done Poles, our suspects, our Chechens, selfies with weapons, “why aren't you in TRO”, a drunk girl gassing in a Mazda in the night Bila Tserkva, man, why do you need two bulletproof vests – they will come in handy, a referendum – what a fucking referendum, an air alarm – an air alarm repulse, block posts in Frankivsk wtf, a concert in the subway, “Ivan, could you stop by my house and feed the parrot”, a tractor pulls a tank,



fighting geese, someone finally shoot that teddy bear, we are good, we are evil, hooray, good morning, welcome to Chornobayivka...

And only a sniper somewhere near Gostomel looks melancholic into the scope, and counts – one, two, three... the red sun sets behind the tops of the pines. Another day behind. In the morning, everything will be the same, only the sniper will count – four, five, six...

### **24.03**

Ukrainians. Andriy. The owner of the service station at which all cars of KS and friends are serviced. Esthete, heavyweight, intellectual. A call.

– Andrei, where are you?

– (explosions are heard) now I will be at KLO on the district, returning from Moschun.

– what are you doing there?

– and the friend said that he had two cars left in Moschun, which could get to the occupiers, so he offered to take them to serve people for evacuation or other needs.

– yes, there is a fucked up, how did you get there?

– and sat down in the car with a friend, and while looping at 140 km/h, they got there...

– you are crazy?

– that's what they told us at the KP in Pushcha Troshnyi...

– so what?

– I will be right now, wait (arrives in a brand-new Renault Master).

– where is your armored car, helmet, machine gun...

– and there is no...

– ok, I'll give you a ride tomorrow, a shipment from a friend from Frankivsk has just arrived.

– thanks, bro.

– yes, I am not sure that you will wear it.

## **Left Ukraine, but remained there**

**I**t was not that I did not at all believe that the predictions about the war could become a reality... This remained a very likely scenario for one of the possible worlds – but, of course, not for the one in which I was living, preparing for Great Lent and planning academic work for the spring. In order to clear my conscience concerning the possible world in which Russia was to attack us, I still forced myself to collect and take the most valuable things to the cottage: favorite books, embroidery, and something from the shrines. On the advice of friends, it was decided that “in the worst case” we would go to the Dacha, to a small village on the right bank of Dnieper, where the war would almost certainly not reach. The selection of the most valuable (for example, which of the fathers of the Church we take and whom we leave) looked quite absurd; his only excuse was that none of this was serious. After all, in reality, there will be no war.

The terrible day of February 24 began at 5 o'clock in the morning with explosions in Kyiv (I didn't hear them myself, but my mother, who was upset by them, called me immediately). The queues in the supermarket, the crowd of people around the ATM, and the instructions for the air raid warning inexorably confirmed that from now on we have to live in the very reality in which the war had just begun. At my mother's insistence, my 6-year-old daughter Varvara and I resorted to a simple “plan B”: we went to the country with the help of friends. When, after driving around the city and standing in traffic jams at the exit, our car finally slipped out of the city,

everyone breathed a sigh of relief: of course, the right-bank Kyiv region is a safe place.

For a couple of days, our modest Makovyshche near Makarov was really pleased with the peace poured into the deep blue sky, which promised that there is no war, there was not and there will not be, at least here. Varya, who had already managed to listen to the explosions on the outskirts of the city, again carelessly played in the yard with the numerous cats and dogs of "Anya-who-lives-at-the-country". Anya and I were looking forward to the long-awaited work in the garden in advance. But each new day destroyed this small cosy illusion. The clamour of war first came from somewhere far away, stealthily approached closer and closer, and finally insolently advanced on the very horizons of our small cosmos.

On February 27, the electricity, water, and Internet treacherously disappeared; the newly upgraded gas boiler also wouldn't turn on without electricity. My netbook only had a charge left for a couple of hours of work (I spent it on translating an article about the evangelical understanding of peace and war, pleasantly spending another evening in the pale glow of the screen). Borya's neighbor said that he was closing his shop until better times. Such an important mobile connection lasted for a few more days, but then it also disappeared. With a well, a fireplace, candles and lanterns powered by solar batteries, and some supplies in our fortunes, we gradually got used to the romance of wartime. This ascetic life would not be so unbearable for two old hippies and a carefree child, if it were not for one feature that no longer fitted into any old-world idyll. The noise was cleared and heard of louder and louder explosions.

Sounds that seem impossible to get used to. Which keeps you up at night and tears you out of the soothing everyday routine during the day. Which shakes the windows and shakes the whole soul, each time putting you on the same Jasper line of life and death. Which

instantly reminds you that you are in the palm of a war... of course, gradually we learned to “tame” them in a certain way. To filter the sounds of war, ignoring some of them and developing a kind of ritualized response to those sounds that cannot be ignored. But despite all efforts, there is something in this reality that consciousness cannot come to terms with – I think, never.

What really struck me in this bleak situation were the people. The threat to life did not make them wolves to each other, which would seem quite logical. On the contrary, those who only a week ago barely greeted each other and seemed to be completely indifferent, suddenly began to help each other with all their might. When we asked our neighbours about the state of affairs, we always received some kind of gift – a bag of potatoes, a dozen homemade eggs, and even a roll of hot pies. It was risky to leave the house, but if you were lucky enough to see fellow villagers, everyone rushed to each other as if thirsty for a well. We exchanged vague rumours, counted those who still remained in the village, found out from whom on the roof you could catch a little mobile communication (for some reason only on push-button phones), deliciously called the attackers names... Just looked at people's faces... It was so joyful to see that there is someone else here.

It seemed worth getting into this mess to find out what your neighbours could be like. The happiness of belonging to these sensitive, compassionate people in a certain sense outweighed the surrounding trouble. I worried about our entire large family, whose wounds and victories I learned about in fragments from the radio (we allowed ourselves this luxury of 10 minutes a day, saving the charge of our mobile phone). And these days I longed for my own family more than ever...

Over time, forays to the neighbors brought less and less encouraging news. As expected from the beginning, our humble village itself was of little interest to anyone, but it ended up between

the positions of enemy armies (a couple of kilometres from different sides). Accordingly, the entire “exchange of courtesies” took place over our heads. The inhabitants of the village could only guess who would kill whom and with what, and pray that the next projectile, rocket, or whatever it is, would not hit their houses by mistake. Refugees began to come and come to us from ever closer places – more and more similar to the hell of Gostomel, Borodyanka, Havronshchyna... Hastily sharing the horror they experienced, they headed somewhere further west.

On Thursday, March 10, our bucket broke off and fell into the well. Neighbor Arkady, pulling it out and repairing it, narrated the latest news, which made the heart freeze and pound... We were practically surrounded, either Russians or Chechens had been operating in the neighbouring villages for a long time, our troops had enough other work, and it was useless to wait for liberation, only aggravation was expected ahead... Arkady did not want to run away, he wanted to fight; only the woman was not allowed to go to the front, she kept begging him to take her and her small children out.

It was the last straw for me. The prospect of uninvited guests visiting us was even more frightening than death under bombs. Clearly feeling that there was no earthly hope left, I prayed to Christ with all my soul, begging him to somehow get us out of here. Then she jumped out of the house and ran to stop the other neighbours. That evening I was ready to leave the village on foot. The last few families with cars that had not yet left began to consider a risky escape. The miracles did not end there: leaning out of the attic window, I suddenly caught a mobile network (which was not there before) and contacted my mother. She immediately received a text message that tomorrow there will be the last green corridor in Makarov and that volunteers from some unknown foundation are ready to come for me... Feeling that everything is in safe hands, I literally revived.

The next day, everything started to move, three cars from a nearby street did gather in a column. Between the belongings and the cat carrier, there was a place for my daughter and me, so I was relieved to give way to the unknown volunteers who were willing to risk their lives for us. Neighbour Arkady also succumbed to his wife's persuasion, but his parents, like my friend, did not want to hear about leaving our "place of strength".

Just in front of our noses, the column from Gostomel had to turn around because of the shelling and look for another way; someone saw how eight enemy armoured personnel carriers went to Makarov, and soon three of them turned and headed somewhere along our central street. We didn't know what happened over there, across the field, but there was no stopping us. Under loud explosions, they got into cars with white rags on the doors (Varvara was on the floor, hiding from possible shelling) and went forward into complete uncertainty.

Fortunately, it turned out that another Russian attack on Makarov's checkpoints had just been repulsed, and on the way we were stopped for inspection only by tired Ukrainian fighters who wanted, as they say, to hug and cry. The convoy passed through the already partially destroyed Makarov, with its bombed-out kindergarten, hospital, and schools, swept along the horror-style track, with shot tanks and cars on the side of the road, with the remains of human bodies covered with rags... Having found ourselves in the relatively calm Zhytomyr Oblast, we felt absolutely happy – although I had no idea where I was going and in which city I would spend the night today...

I am writing these lines on a children's playground bathed in the evening sun in a hospitable German village, and my soul is torn in two. On the one hand, there is a joy that there is peace around again, that my daughter no longer has to sleep on the floor in the cold basement, waking up to rockets flying by; that everywhere on our

way we meet real people, as sensitive and caring as our fellow villagers. On the other hand, I did not manage to leave Ukraine completely. My whole life remains there – my mother and eldest son in Kyiv, which is subjected to new destruction every day; my beloved, who is unable to leave another village in the occupied part of Chernihiv Oblast; our “Anya-who-lives-at-the-cottage” in Makovysh, where the occupiers are already walking around, “politely” breaking windows to check this or that house; friends in other troubled places... This anxiety for relatives – that is, in the end for all Ukrainians – can be pushed to the background, suppressed by a bunch of new impressions – but it is impossible to get rid of it. A disobedient heart still refuses to consider the prospects of a career abroad. In letters to friends, I repeat: “I will definitely return after our victory!”

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**Oleh Stefan**

*Actor, Kyiv*

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**“Be careful, the door is closing. The next stop is Lubyanka”**

**March 2.**

**F**riends, I have my own correspondent from Moscow. And this is not “Aunt Klava”, whose godmother is in Russia. Here is real information as of today. If it works out, there will be chronicles for every day.

**March 2.**

Chronicles from Russia.

Now I am in Siberia. The mood of people is mostly calm. Prices in stores are still approximately of the pre-war variety. People speak cautiously about Ukraine. In conversations, they try not to comment on the assessment of the situation. Ordinary people went to the shops, they are buying equipment, because they understand that it will not be available soon. But the mood is calm in most cases. “It's somewhere out there, we have nothing to do with it”. Almost everyone believes that this apocalypse will not affect them. Many times, I've heard “Two or three days and Ukraine will capitulate, and everything will be fine”. Even today. The intelligentsia shouts that it's all f\* up, but they are not really believed. We must not forget that we are dealing with a country where education has been deteriorating at an alarming rate in recent years. They will start doing something, go out only when there is nothing to eat or something like mobilization begins. That is, something will pull them out of their comfort zone. And now, almost no one has felt the changes yet. We must wait. I think from one week to a month. Only



empty supermarket shelves can change something here. So far, they are still full. Do the oxen roar when shelves are full? (By the way, remember that an ox is a castrated bull). Friends, as promised, daily chronicles from Moscow from my correspondent. Reality. Today. Further – first-person speech:

### **March 3.**

Soon I will be in Moscow, currently in the big Russian city of 1 million in population. Central part. Fire alarms start in the city, of course it's just testing. But all state employees are trained to quickly leave the premises. Training. Everyone understands everything. The main emotion is "Although Ukraine is far away, those "Khokhly"<sup>20</sup> are persistent, who knows them". Unexpectedly for many, a terrorist security regime is declared in schools, immediately in several of them children are kicked out on the street, because the educational institution is allegedly mined. Several at once! It is clear, that "they" put pressure on nerves and fuel paranoia. In this way, state security structures prepare the "nation" for restrictions in all spheres. They immediately make it clear that if you are told to jump, you jump. People do as they are told, no questions asked and mostly no negativity. By the way: when there was vaccination, the majority did everything to avoid it, but when their rights are restricted based on television propaganda, they are "always ready". For the most part, those with whom I had the opportunity to communicate support the war. Most are sure that Russia is fighting fascists. Arguments do not work at all. One girl was very surprised when I told her about all the events from 2013 to 2022. She was shocked and seems to have begun to understand something. She really wanted me to talk to her husband. But when I tried, there was a "blank wall"<sup>21</sup>: he said, "I consider myself half-Ukrainian, I have roots there, everything is not so clear,

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<sup>20</sup> Russian: "Khokhly", which means "Topknots" – offensive name for Ukrainians in Russian slang.

<sup>21</sup> Ukrainian: "blank wall", which means – no understanding at all.

Ukrainians are innocent, but America must be fought back..." Another guy tried to explain to his family that Ukraine is not a Nazi state. His cursed. Now they are making a foreign passport for the child, they want to run away from Russia.

In general, all the conscious people I have met, and there are VERY FEW of them, are thinking of running. Because they see no other way out. Prices in grocery stores are as always. If there is a small increase, then it is almost imperceptible. But the prices for orders in online stores doubled. During the pandemic, almost everyone got used to ordering everything online. For many, increased prices came as an unpleasant surprise. Unfortunately, people mainly blame "that moronic Ukraine, who needs it..." for these changes. It seems to me that they will feel "Stolen happiness" effect very quickly, but for a long time they will not understand who is "the devil, that stole their moon from the sky". To be continued. Thanks to my correspondent from Russia. Chronicles continue.

#### **March 4.**

Chronicles of falling into the abyss.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have almost nothing to please you today. It is covered by a kind of dull, unenlightened dream, as if nothing is happening, but "everything is going to hell", as Yehor Letov<sup>22</sup> used to say. People suddenly saw today that the price of the simplest fabrics has doubled. Taxis also get more expensive very quickly. A month ago, I drove from the airport for 250, and today it's 340. In the city where I live, it's now becoming "fashionable" to sculpt those bastard letters "Z" on the car. There are a lot of them. As I shivered when I saw the Colorado rags, so now I tremble when I see this trash. Several people are discussing that the airports will be closed in a month. The planes will stand "on concrete"<sup>23</sup>. They understand this. Surprisingly, there is little talk about those killed

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<sup>22</sup> Russian bard and singer.

<sup>23</sup> Russian: "on concrete", which means that they are not going to fly anymore.

and captured. Maybe I'm unlucky, but it doesn't seem to bother anyone. Almost everyone repeats "everything will be fine" as a mantra. They try to persuade themselves. But this is psychological protection. This can be seen in the frightened eyes. Lyrical digression.

When our Leonid Danylovych [Kuchma] wrote "Ukraine is not Russia", he forgot to add that the opposite also sounds true. They don't understand us at all, that's our strength. They underestimate. That's why they "get punched in the face". But we should not despise them either. To hate – yes, but not to despise. Today, one man told me about 1991. How the same Russians stood in the square in Moscow in front of the tanks and prepared to die, and no one was afraid.

Where are those brave people now?

"Yura, we've spoiled everything..." My fellow Ukrainians, dear citizens, please understand, that people have been brainwashed here [in Russia] for 22 years. There are less than 0.1 percent of those who think soberly. For them, going against the police is suicide. For the most part, it is the intelligentsia, who did not hold anything heavier than an iPhone in their hands. And even if they leave, it will not change anything. Those normal ones are simply transplanted and mutilated. The authorities here hold everything in their "iron claws". We could go to the Maidan<sup>24</sup> because thousands were coming out nearby. And the authorities in 1991 in Moscow and 2013 in Kyiv were much weaker. Here it is different. Yesterday, the last "more or less objective" media were closed. The TV now has only the propaganda trash streamed almost 24 hours a day. On all the main channels of the state TV. By the way, TVs work almost everywhere. In offices, in hair salons, in shops. It's the same thing everywhere: "fascists, "banderovtsy"<sup>25</sup>, killing themselves, America, NATO, special

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<sup>24</sup> Events happened in Kyiv, Ukraine, at the main square back in 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Ukrainian: "banderovtsy", which is a common offensive synonym for Ukrainian ultra-nationalists in Russian slang.

operation for the liberation of poor Russian-speaking people". And they listen to it all the time. 22 years in a row.

What do you think is left in their heads? But it's a miracle that anyone was still conscious there. I will be in Moscow tomorrow. Let's see what's there.

Glory to Ukraine, Cossacks. Glory to the nation.

Daily chronicles from enemy territory.

**March 5.**

Chronicles of life in Moscow.

Good evening, community.

In Moscow, everything looks as if nothing had happened. People go to and from work in the same way. For them, a war in Ukraine is the same as a war somewhere in Antarctica.

It does not concern them. Of course, there are conversations, but mostly about how unpleasant it is to give up conveniences. You can't buy games on Steam, you can't pay for coffee with an iPhone, you can't watch the new Batman movie at the cinema... Although it seems that people have gotten used to the restrictions in two years of COVID and for them it just looks like a continuation of the pandemic.

"Survived the corona virus? Now we will survive this incomprehensible war. But it is interesting how they react to restrictions on the Internet. They closed all the media, closed Facebook, Twitter... And here are those who make up the majority of ordinary people who say that, as they say: "we are not present on that Facebook and we never will. VK is much more convenient. Instagram is also not blocked, so we continue to live normally!" And those who care about Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, install a VPN and again continue to pretend that everything is fine. "Well, we've installed another app on the smartphone, it's not a problem!"

Absolute indifference.

A little worried about mobilization. But Russians are a special category. They constantly live in the "maybe it will happen!" format.

As long as it does not affect them personally, they will talk, but they will not dare to do anything. I spoke with a woman who holds absolutely liberal views and is against the war and Putin himself.

She works for the state, she has a little daughter. "I can neither go to a rally nor write something against aggression on the Internet, because after the "law on fakes and obstruction of the army", at best I will be fired, at worst I will be imprisoned. Who will take care of my daughter? I don't want her to end up in an orphan house..."

So, about a third of those I see and talk to consider the war just and necessary. Most of them are either very young people, under 21 or over 60.

The main part is indifferent. This is the working class, who have children, mortgages, loans, they hold on to their salary and their little world in which they are quiet and peaceful.

And the absolute minority of those who understand everything but are afraid. And I understand them. These are almost entirely people of intellectual labor. The war caught them by surprise, they have no leaders, no organization, no coordination.

After the introduction of total censorship and criminal penalties for expression on the Internet, they will not risk their lives. But the first bells are ringing.

First, restrictions on the purchase of products. Flour, sugar, cereals. This is frightening, because ordinary Russians have a "genetically imprinted" panic when store shelves are empty. Second, I didn't see a single smiling face at the airport or the plane. All airline workers seem to have forgotten how to be polite. As if their thoughts are not here at all. By the way, air tickets to Turkey from "Orkoston"<sup>26</sup> have become more expensive several times. Thirdly, the flow of emigrants. It is already very big. And this "nation" did not fully feel the scale of the mess in which everyone found themselves. I will go shopping tomorrow. Let's see what's there. Let's

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<sup>26</sup> Russia.

listen to ordinary people. Ladies and Gents, message me: maybe someone is interested in something specific. I will try to find out.

Oleh Stefan

Message for today. Thank you friend!

**March 9.**

Chronicles of a “quietly f\* up situation...”

So, dear society, it can be argued that some present changes have begun even in the capital of “Mordor”<sup>27</sup>. People talk a lot and everyone speaks in a whisper. Today I heard a lot of conversations in stores, on the street, in parking lots, and all of them had almost the same content: “What kind of horror is happening?!” The interesting thing is that all this is whispered and looking around. If they notice a stranger, they switch to the ordinary conversations.

In the cosmetics store: “This one was fired, that store closed, how to live? We have to hold on to our work with both hands, because now there will be such a wave of cuts and unemployment, just hold on! (noticing me) Oh, good day, what can I tell you?” On the street: “McDonald's just opened in our neighborhood, only children used to go there after kindergarten, and here you go!”<sup>28</sup> But it's not for long, right?”

In another store: “Gasoline prices have risen terribly! Let the management now give me money for fuel, because I can't stand it on my own anymore...” In stores, they are slowly but surely sorting out all the products with discounts. They also make spontaneous “recalculations”, take everything off the shelves and barely have time to make new price tags. I saw how today a man, barely holding in his hands, carried four large bottles of fabric conditioner...

The times of scarcity are already returning. Another man spent a long-time choosing cigarettes that fell within his price range. “How much is the pack of Winston? How much? Really?!” The rapidity of

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<sup>27</sup> Russia.

<sup>28</sup> Means, it is closed now.

immersion in the abyss is somehow cosmic. People don't quite believe. People don't understand. People are not ready for such drastic changes. But very soon they will need someone to blame. The one whom they will gladly tear to pieces. It will take time. But today it seemed to me that it would be needed less than it seemed a week ago. Today's Putin law, which allows you to buy gold bars without VAT, became the highlight of the government's abuse of slaves. I heard hysterical giggling on this occasion more than once.

Do you remember Mary, Queen of France?

– The people have no bread, my queen! – No bread? Then let them eat cakes! Checkmate, electorate (yes, I can also write poems on a typewriter). Putin must have forgotten that Maria ended up on the guillotine. Well, let's not tell him. Let there be a surprise. The atmosphere here is heavy, dear friends. And although your humble servant tries to see optimism in everything, if death and fire are walking in Ukraine now, the process of rotting is taking place here and that smell can already be smelled everywhere. And again, it is not up to me to choose my fate, but emotionally it is very difficult to live in Moscow. Fear, helplessness, inability to change anything... It actually resembles a severe form of Stockholm syndrome. The terrorist took the country hostage and has been holding it for so long that the hostage begins to justify and even idolize her executioner.

That's bullshit, folks. By the way, let me tell you about McDonald's.

Do you know what significant event in 1990 made it finally clear that the USSR was on the hook? Opening of McDonald's on Pushkin Square in Moscow. There were queues all the way to Mayakovsky metro station. It was a completely new feeling. A new country. New world (read from Pavel Sanayev in "Chronicles of a razdolbai" – wonderful work, believe me. Besides, Sanayev turned out to be a real person, and he did not support the war, but on the contrary declared himself a Ukrainian Russian-speaking writer). 33 years have passed.

Today McDonald's did not operate on Pushkin's square anymore. The circle is finished. Dear Sir/Madam, I am sorry that there are many letters today. It happened. Tell me what can be changed or added. Everything will be Ukraine, I am sure.

Oleh Stefan

Reasoning "ours", from not our territory.

**March 10.**

Chronicles of systemic madness.

Good evening to your house, dear, wherever it is now. Because our house is not far away, but where we are, there are our relatives. Today there is a lack of quality news, but there are some. First of all, I learned that in Belarus there are lists of citizens of the Russian Federation who work or have worked in the public service.

For what, you ask? And so that they do not have the opportunity to work in the country of the "moustached cockroach"<sup>29</sup>. That is, although in many respects Belarus has "laid down" under Putin, the processes of laying straws are ongoing there as well. It is done without much fanfare, but it is done. This especially applies to cultural workers. Second. "Optimization" and "import substitution" are already actively starting. Today, one Moscow theatre has been liquidated and merged with another. It is interesting that recently that second "swallow" absorbed another "brother in art". The state is actively signaling – that "this is it, that culture is enough for you. We need dumb and controlled cattle, which we will throw like cannon fodder at our neighbors". And at one interesting festival, where a meeting of the theatres of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)<sup>30</sup> countries was supposed to take place, serious changes took place. Many theaters refuse to go to the aggressor country and the organizers began to look for candidates in the domestic arena. "The

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<sup>29</sup> Aliaksandr Lukaschenko.

<sup>30</sup> The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional intergovernmental organization in Eurasia.



detachment did not notice the loss of a fighter" so to speak. Third: it is increasingly difficult for Russians to go somewhere. And it's not even a matter of the fact that the planes don't fly almost anywhere, but where they fly, the tickets cost somewhere under 120–150 thousand rubles. The fact is that now even in countries more or less loyal to Russians, it is almost impossible to find a job. Ukrainians can, but the Russians don't.

Housing is rented out to them without much desire, there is even a message that "we will rent it out, but not to citizens of the Russian Federation". "Are you Russian? Ok. F\* you".

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It's amazing how a short conversation in an elevator can make you want to howl with rage. In the elevator next to me, a young girl and a boy: Come on, I want ice cream! – Well, now, let's do something... It seems like a trifle, bullshit... But... I understand that they cannot constantly sprinkle ashes on their heads and deny themselves small joys. That's how people are. But... I want to suppress it. Sorry. Now I would like to say about the fact that there is no cry for the people who died in Ukraine. This is certainly not the case. The majority of educated, intelligent, conscious people, and there are quite a few of them here, are in shock. They go to rallies, write on social networks, cry, shout, and every day morally die of shame and hopelessness. They don't care. Many are not silent, although now you can be arrested not just for cursing Putin, but for liking an anti-war post and on someone else's social network page. A huge number of people do not support this madness but... There are others. And I'm not even talking about animals that want to kill Ukrainians and get high from the fact that Mariupol is dying of hunger and thirst. Such do not deserve to live as a social class. And there are those who, supporting aggression and murder, try to defend themselves in such a perverse way.

And if Ukraine defends itself physically from Putin's killers, the Russians defend themselves psychologically. No one here was ready

for the “new reality”, where there is a war with Ukraine. It really does not fit in their brains. This is where all these “Ukrofascists”, “it's all fakes”, “liberation operation”, “Putin is a scumbag!!!”... oh, sorry, it's out of habit... They defend their comfortable mental “measure” that now bursting at the seams. The mind tries to get out of the attack, and forms an alternative reality, in which propaganda helps a lot. They are not bloodthirsty monsters after all. But everything happened too unexpectedly for them, and they try to bury their heads in the ground like an ostrich, not noticing that they are being f\* all the time (pardon my French).

That's right. When we win, the most difficult thing will be with these “ostriches”. Because their “Matrix” will not withstand the horror that will unfold when the Ukrainian flag flies over the Kremlin. And finally. It's funny. A friend said. When we win and Russia breaks up into parts, those parts will want to join someone.

In this context, the phrase “Everything will be Ukraine” sounds with a completely different flavor. But we don't need an empire. We just want to be free. Our national idea is GET AWAY FROM US. Neither add nor subtract... Thanks to the one who is in the epicenter of the enemy.

### **March 11th.**

Chronicles of stages of acceptance.

Well, “good night, kitties”, as Yura Gudimenko says. Today was an extremely interesting day. A series of management meetings with representatives of the authorities took place at Russian universities. At these briefings, the rectors and vice-rectors, heads of faculties were given very clear instructions regarding the “party’s policy”. Students who do not publicly support the war or go to rallies will be expelled without the possibility of resuming their education. Unofficially, the students were told: “If you “knock”<sup>31</sup> on those who oppose Putin's aggression, it will be much easier for you to pass the

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<sup>31</sup> Means, “if you will pass an anonymous complaint”.

exams. – Report a friend, and get a “machine gun”! Bitches, you still don't understand that you will need a machine gun, in any case.

A woman at the restaurant: “This is just a plot for a story! My mother, 78 years old, collected all the money she could find and went to Italy, to emigrate! Do you understand? So, I don't understand either!”. Oh, disrespectful, but we're going to get screwed, as we understand. An intelligent woman in the Russian Federation, and even at this age – an endangered species. People talk in the subway, at the tables of cafes, and all the conversations are more or less about the same thing. We turned off Google Pay, put VPN, North Korea style restrictions and fear. No one talks about the dead. About the destroyed Mariupol. About killed and maimed people. About hostages in the cities of Ukraine... Fear. Commander “Strah”<sup>32</sup>. General Strah<sup>33</sup>. So far it does not concern them.

Yet. They still do not understand that the war will come to everyone's home. They want to hide, but they have already been found and counted. Very soon this curtain will fall, and everyone will see the tattered walls of this burned-out theatre. We have to wait for that.

Although sometimes it seems that it is almost impossible. There are three Russian Guardsmen standing in the subway, staring intently at passers-by. People avert their eyes and try to avoid them as far as possible. There is evidence that such “trinities” stop people and demand to show their phone and messages on messengers. This practice has long been introduced in Belarus and, apparently, the “oprichniks”<sup>34</sup> of Moscow are taking the experience from their neighbours. I was at a concert of a cool musician today. A person understands absolutely everything, and shouts from the stage about the upside-down world in which people live here. Of course, not directly.

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<sup>32</sup> Russian “Strah”, which means fear.

<sup>33</sup> Same.

<sup>34</sup> Bodyguards.

With naive faith in a bright future. That, as it were, “all this horror will end, friend...” Everyone in the hall is crying and hiding their eyes. But how many are there in that hall? About fifty or eighty people. And no one dares to say it like it is.

Aesop's speech. Shame. Fear. Yes, and that... Do you know what is the most difficult? Don't lie to you. You want to be an optimist you want to somehow support... And when you are very hard morally and ashamed, hopelessness squeezes your pride, there is a great desire to lie to your own self a little. Do you understand? There to inflate, here to decorate... Make, f\* content. Because these posts turned out to be useful to someone... People. I don't want to “make content”. I will try to talk about what I see, trying as much as possible not to embarrass you and, perhaps more importantly, myself. Perhaps this is the most difficult thing right now – not to deceive yourself. But here is what I will say. Now I have no more important feelings, but the one that I am Ukrainian. During the Revolution of Dignity, when Yanukovych's henchmen watered the barricades with water cannons, men undressed and stood under the stream of water. They shouted “Baptism!”. Then I really understood what it is to be proud of one's people. Be proud that I was also born here. Hertz is a deadly dance. So, glory to the nation. Death to enemies.

What we have planned, we continue. Moscow. Today.

### **March 12.**

Chronicles of the grey world. Evening to you, dear community. Here – Muscovy is sinking deeper and deeper into the quagmire of obscurantism. Today, the local “Cheburnet”<sup>35</sup> made an effort and climbed the surfboards. This is what I understood then, when the “blood was coming from my eyes”. First – the youth. School pupils and students. The segment from 13 to 25 years old. I have already said that education has been in great decline in the last 10 years.

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<sup>35</sup> Censored Internet.

Most of the youth have an aggressive and racist mood. How can that be, you ask? Very easy. All this time they were drinking their lattes, playing console games, dressing up in Zara and H&M, and they didn't care what was going on there or anywhere else. They were "Out of politics". And now, when their toys were taken away, they become aggressive, like children in a supermarket. Have a tantrum with wailing on the floor and Tourette's syndrome. Now they absolutely seriously shout about "Nazis in Kyiv", say that Ukrainians are killing themselves, and send curses to the "Khokhly"<sup>36</sup> because of which they, the poor, are in trouble. In the comments, in fact, there are many young people who wish the death of Ukrainians who do not want to lay down their arms. Another category is – naive idiots. They say: "How do Ukrainians not understand that they just need to lay down their arms and that's it!!! The killings will stop, there will be free elections, there will be a new state leadership and we will all live peacefully and wonderfully!" And they actually believe in it. And they honestly don't understand why the Ukrainians prevent such a fair and transparent "special operation"... Do you understand?

They are not just brainwashed by the state TV. These are young people who had access to the Internet, the ability to read and watch, but they used their options like this.

This is some total laziness and stupidity. People don't want to know anything. And after all, it's much easier to hate. In almost every post on various sites, there are many comments about "Khokhly<sup>37</sup>-idiots", "we will still force you to respect Russia"... People, let's be proud that we are Ukrainians. That we understand the difference between a full life and freedom. That we can feel pain for a whole country, and shame when we cannot be at home during war. That we cannot explain how honour and dignity feel inside. It will be difficult. Sometimes it is almost hopeless. But Ukraine is

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<sup>36</sup> See: footnote 1.

<sup>37</sup> Same.

fighting for exactly what the Russians cannot understand. And probably they won't be able to. Well, fuck them. We are on our own. Let's hug, brothers.

Oleh Stefan

My friend is from Moscow today.

**March 16.**

Chronicles...

Evening to all those who fiercely hate. Evening to all who can kill. Evening to all who cry and cannot find a way out. Except through the window. Briefly about Moscow. The sugar has run out. It is impossible to buy in three supermarkets. They also sweep everything that is available at a discount, from men's perfumes to children's toys. The further from the metropolis, the more aggressive the rhetoric of "ordinary zombies". People who are less successful, less educated, less cultured shout very loudly. Sometimes it seems that you only hear these screams. Sometimes it seems that absolutely all Russians are murderers and madmen. Mass media in Russia no longer function, now there is only propaganda. There are no more sources of alternative information. This is it. Finish. It is absolutely clear that 90 % of Russians do not know what a VPN is, nor what to think, in general... Those conscious and smart, almost everyone left. Those with children without foreign passports remained. Or those with old parents. Also, I met another category who are simply afraid of not finding themselves abroad... All of them are afraid and sit more quietly than the first ones. But there is a feeling that it will not help. By the way, new applications for travel passports are no longer accepted. They started opening criminal cases against bloggers who do not support the war. According to the new "law", they face up to 15 years in prison.

Moscow itself quieted down. The number of people on the streets has decreased, and the number of people at the stores has increased. There are no more disputes in the streets like in the first

days of the war. Everyone seems to have accepted this reality. Prices continue to rise. Every day. It is like a rope that is slowly tightened around the neck. It seems that there is still something to breathe, but everything is more difficult. Now about something else. It is important. It so happened that I see what and how is happening from this side. I don't like this role, but unfortunately, I can't do anything about it. I see what and how the people of these countries differ. I also understand Ukrainians and am proud of them. And, unfortunately, I understand the Russians too and I am extremely sorry for a very small part of this huge "Mordor"<sup>38</sup>. Also, unfortunately, I can see another part. Which cannot be fixed. Beings who do not have honour, conscience, intelligence and dignity. Today it was these inhumans who bombed the theatre in Mariupol. There were a lot of REAL people there. And it is obvious to me that almost every Ukrainian now wants only one thing – revenge.

Now, point by point:

1. Russians and We are not brothers. Never again. Whatever happened between us before. We have nothing in common now, except that we are "bipedals without feathers".

2. Almost 90 % of Russians are dumb zombified cattle. They made possible what is happening now. They must suffer for it.

3. There are children. They are not guilty of anything yet. But they are already being made into a "Putin-youth" by Goebbelsian means, which will also have to be killed.

4. There are ten percent... Actually less... Real people in this country. Mostly it is the "intelligentsia"<sup>39</sup>. They resisted this madness as best they could. All these years. Who could. But they were defeated. A devastating defeat. There is nothing to blame them for. Leave them alone. They suicide themselves every day.

5. What will happen next... There will only be blood. A lot of blood.

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<sup>38</sup> Russia.

<sup>39</sup> Intellectuals.

When there will be revenge, and it will be terrible and bloody, I would dream of only one thing.

I would only pray for one thing. About one thing. So that Ukrainians do not turn into those against whom they are fighting. So that Ukraine manages not to become cannibalistic. Let the Ukrainian soldier who comes to kill me – a “collaborator” to think, and (because he should not and his will in his right) let him understand why I was in Moscow when Mariuk<sup>40</sup> was destroyed, let this soldier save the life my child. And do not let him to be like those who dropped a bomb on the theatre today.

Oleh Stefan

Moscow today. Through the eyes of my friend. Continuation.

**March 18**

Chronicles of “what cannot be named”.

Well, dear? F\* it. The speed at which everything flies into the abyss is simply extraordinary. In fact, it is even interesting to see how the situation changes almost every hour. There is no longer a feeling that change as a slow thing. Today, perhaps because of the shameful “holiday of the Crimean spring”, there were many signs of growing paranoia. I went to the centre of the capital of “Orkostan”<sup>41</sup>.

Autocars, especially near the bloody square, are stuck in a square-nest manner. A lot. White, urban, they look comfortable like public park buses. There are policemen and Russian Guardsmen standing everywhere, and I didn't see three more men in civilian clothes. I didn't see the Cosmonauts, but still, in the center of the city, the number of people in uniform is almost equal to ordinary people and tourists.

On the way past the building of the state prosecutor's office, I see an episode and I can't understand whether it's the last stage of cringe, or extremely subtle trolling...

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<sup>40</sup> Mariupol.

<sup>41</sup> Russia.



A woman is standing with a huge flag in the form of a “Colorado ribbon” on her chest, a sign hangs on – “Purges are needed in the government! Work, brothers!” And also, everything is decorated with black and orange abomination.

No one detains her, although the building of the police station is still 50 meters away. Apparently, law enforcement officers have broken the template: words that lead to extremism and undermining the regime, but all this under the “correct” banner.

“And who knows, maybe it's the opposite “for ours”? Maybe “work, brothers!” — is it about the same brothers? Isn't it about those? Complicated!”. Funny and terrible...

People on the streets speak quietly, do not laugh loudly, although today is Friday, the holiday is stupid, the weather is great, and the city centre is beautiful. In general, there are very few people...

Although maybe everyone in Luzhniki who knows...

A woman is standing near “Pyatyorochka”<sup>42</sup> and is loudly indignant.

“Why were those tanks needed there? It was necessary to develop normal weapons! Tanks are an absolutely useless thing! The “Khokhly”<sup>43</sup> were ready for war, and now our guys in those tanks are burning as if in iron coffins! We need rockets! Lots of rockets!”

Then she calms down a little and continues:

“I was little, I didn't know anything about this America at all. And I don't need it at all. It was useless then, and it is now. There will be no such America, and everything will be fine!”

The atmosphere is oppressive. I spoke with two wonderful people today, and they talk almost in one voice about fear, about self-censorship, even in ordinary conversations. When you say something across party lines, you want to look around to see if there

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<sup>42</sup> Supermarket.

<sup>43</sup> See: footnote 1.

is someone else standing nearby... In the subway, people try to close the screens of their mobile phones. Make it so that it is impossible to look in. Due to reports of arrests and interrogations of Ukrainians in Moscow, friends from Ukraine start writing, asking to be careful...

People delete correspondence in messengers, cancel subscriptions to liberal Telegram channels, delete their posts and comments on unblocked Facebook. Even old posts. Even those posts from many years back. By the way, Facebook is available again and people are wondering why. Is it because they can't block it normally, because Rospotrebnadzor's hands are growing out of their ass? Or is it just a trap and those who will write anti-Putin posts will be easier to see and "take on a pencil"<sup>44</sup>?

There is no answer. But it's very scary.

Muscovites now eat at Burger King. In general, there is such a tendency to cheer yourself up. Like, it's okay! Well, there will be other burgers! Well, we haven't eaten red caviar and we won't! Those sanctions are terrible only for the rich, and we are normal!

And everything is similar. People prepare to survive. The loss of some material values does not frighten them, perhaps because no one yet fully understands the extent of the restrictions that are coming. And what about freedom... It seems that many have realized that the freedom to which they somehow managed to get used to, which in principle was not so huge, as if looking through a keyhole... has completely ended. I bought the book today, "Protocols of interrogations of Vsevolod Meyerhold". Released in 2022. Sign. Be careful, the door is closing. The next stop is Lubyanka. Received from Moscow.

### **March 22.**

Chronicles of thoughts about the inevitable.

Good evening to you, dear community. I don't have anything fundamentally new, but some thoughts appeared regarding what I

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<sup>44</sup> Control / put on surveillance.

see around. You know, in fact, now, in everyday conversations, the war or Ukraine in general does not even appear. Murders, deaths, graves, these are not at all on the agenda here in Moscow. But I went to see what was in other cities. There... the same thing! What should be noted is that in the regions, they also stopped loudly shouting "For victory!" at road intersections.

Everyone focused on prices.

PRICES!!! This is the main thing that everyone is talking about now. From officials to janitors.

Young women suffer because of cosmetics and wardrobe, all of which have more than doubled in price. Housewife – about cereals, sugar and meat. How to feed the family is still unclear. Out of inertia, people still go to pizzerias and order sushi, but the voice of economy is getting louder even among those who make up the Russian "middle class". Absolute silence regarding the dead Ukrainians and the ugly actions of the Russian army. This is ultimately due to two reasons. First, it is banal, because survival is at stake. Hard times, and later it will be even harder. Not for everyone. "Your shirt is closer to your body". Ordinary people are people who think "by their stomachs". Ukrainians and Syrians are the same for them. Of course, there are connections, relatives, acquaintances... But all this is somewhere out there... Far away. The general opinion is: "well, this will never happen in our country. There will be no war. Even though Putin is so-so, he will protect Russia". In addition, for them, Ukrainians are "not completely self-sufficient" people. The arrogance I have encountered here is absolutely phenomenal.

Maybe that's why they don't feel empathy for the deaths of these "Khohly"<sup>45</sup>...

Those who cannot sympathize with other people cannot sympathize at all.

This part of the soul is missing. No will is needed. It needs stability and a warm place to which it has time to get used to.

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<sup>45</sup> See: footnote 1.

Stomachs on legs... Secondly, they have already adopted two laws on the condemnation of war and fakes, and everyone understands: if “they” want to imprison, “they” will imprison. Fines. Real terms. Today Navalny is sentenced to another 9 years of strict regime based on a fabricated case. No one wants to go to prison for fifteen years because of a post on Facebook about Ukrainians who are somewhere there in Ukraine...

People are even afraid to go to blocked social networks, install more secure messengers, clean correspondence, and delete old posts. Absolute horror. Paralyzing. Those Russians who left the country feel more or less free. Almost all of them condemn the war and Putin, but a few days ago, when they were still here, they were silent. They were silent, because they have relatives, because it is easy to become hostages. You can get all of them. All of them. So... Putin's “stability” reigns in the city. Quiet, cowardly, with a hint of collapse. Only stupid swastikas on the windows of cars and minibuses remained.

It's especially funny to see those “Z” symbols on garbage trucks. Here they are extremely appropriate! And also... That's what I thought. When the USSR collapsed, the country was covered by a terrible avalanche of banditry. Human life was worth nothing. Where did all these racketeers, strong guys with Kalashnikovs and “PM” pistols come from, who were ready to kill so easily? Afghan People<sup>46</sup> came from there, from a war that no one needed, and they themselves turned out to be useless to the country<sup>47</sup> that threw them there. Then the same thing happened in Chechnya, and again a surge of “showdowns” and murders. Do you understand what will happen when they return from an unjust war? Ukraine will win and all these “Ivans” will return home, abandoned to their own devices, angry, with a feeling of betrayal and being lost.

Good night, Ukraine. Revenge for your tears will be terrible.

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<sup>46</sup> Those who participated in the military campaigns in Afganistan.

<sup>47</sup> Means: USSR.

Each person has their own path. Against the background of other crippled fates of Ukrainian citizens, my story will seem soft and plush, but there are always these “but” ... In defense of what I experienced, I will leave a quote: “Who are the judges?” From the Russian-Ukrainian War, I was “taken away” three times. The first time it happened was when I chose the University for admission. The choice fell on the provincial Berdyansk in the Zaporozhye region instead of the regional Donetsk. Although I was born and lived in Mariupol in the period 1994–2012. The chronology is further: 2012 – Euro (football), 2013 – Maidan and the Revolution, 2014 – war in the Donbass. My house, that is, Mariupol, then defended. For Crimea, you know – the annexation to this day is in place; as well as for the Donbass.

When I studied at Berdyansk University, my wisdom teeth (eights) grew. After 10 years, I dared to tear them out in my native Mariupol. Two upper teeth and the lower right one were pulled out by a surgeon of the highest category, his Surname was “Krepkyi”<sup>48</sup>. The whole process took us a week. We “hurried slowly” so to speak. And in Berdyansk there were urgent matters waiting for me. February 23 at 6 AM Kyiv time I packed the bags. Mom left for work. Next, I went to my dad. We drank coffee with him from the vending machine (it felt like it was “for the last time”). Having returned from my father, I’ve collected 40 liters of drinking water for my mother, after which I’ve closed the doors and left for the Bus Station. A ticket to Berdyansk was bought in the evening. Passed the first checkpoint of the Security Service of Ukraine, near Mariupol, and the second in

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<sup>48</sup> Literal meaning is “Strong”.

Mangush (its suburb). What to hide, I was happy. There was something heavy in the air. And I've arrived quickly.

Having met with my girlfriend, we spent time together. Nothing foreshadowed trouble, but internal unrest grew. In the morning of February 24, we woke up not from the sun through the window, but from three shots of rockets in the city (there were dead among the military on that day). Later, when we leave the occupation, I learn from the media, from President Zelensky, that the attack on my country was supposed to be on February 22, when I was recovering from anesthesia with a tooth in Mariupol. One day, as you can see, can play an important role in the rest of your life. Starting from five in the morning on February 24 and until April 11, we became participants of some psychological game. I dare to joke, the game was called: "Escape from the Labyrinth". Russian World, sample of 2022. Next, I will describe those fractures that bent, but did not break our spirit. And yes, against the backdrop of this whole nightmare, my parents stayed in Mariupol. Today I know that they are alive. My mother's apartment was smashed with shrapnel. The rocket hit higher – our female neighbor on the 3rd floor burned down, as did the entire riser<sup>49</sup>, except for a few apartments near the entrance. Father was less fortunate with property – his apartment burned down; now he lives elsewhere. Then I didn't know anything... From this, personal experiences were divided into two kindred souls and stretched for 100 km. This is the distance from Mariupol to Berdyansk. Before the war, we lived in a rented apartment. Our house bordered the private houses. There was a grocery store nearby. After the explosions, I went and bought an espresso at the kiosk. I stood in a puddle and drank it slowly. The rain intensified. So, that's how I met a full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine. Then I've returned home and took the bag. I went to the store and stood in line for an hour for groceries. I went. I had 5,000 UAH in my pocket. Spent 2500.

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<sup>49</sup> Here: side of the building.

For your reference, the city of Berdyansk is a powerful resort city in Ukraine, however geographically, unfortunately, it is a dead end. This means that only the coastline of the Sea of Azov is farther – open water. There is only one road – only in the direction of Zaporozhye. At the store, priorities were given to drinking water, vegetables, meat, fish and non-perishable products. Two walks there and back and my fridge was filled. I asked myself: why we didn't leave with a minimum of things that morning? There are three answers: firstly, sabotage groups introduced from the Russian Federation worked on the roads and the cars were simply stopped and shot, the time to leave was too short; secondly, the enemy attack was all over the country, and there was nowhere to run, except for the nearest Poland. I am military-capable. That means, I won't cross the border. Thirdly, there were militarized groups heading in the direction of the city.

The main blow fell on Kyiv and the Kyiv region. The “rashist blitzkrieg”<sup>50</sup> failed. Everything was like in a fog. Turned on the TV. I’ve learned about the concept of “emergency suitcase”. We started collecting things. Went out to the pharmacy. I've spent there 1000 UAH. I have 1500 UAH left. I took apart the entire closet. We fortified a window so that in case of emergency, it would be more difficult for fragments to get into the living area of the room. All the first week we spent the night behind two walls in the bathroom. For hours, after the announcement of the air raid alert, I sat on the toilet sit, so that my girl lay with a blanket in the bathroom. Then we changed. Tired. In the morning we go to sleep in the hall. We slept anxiously. There was no shelter in our house. Sea town means – groundwater is close to the surface. It’s a bit funny. Our basement is knee-deep in water. The door is sealed. First floor. The outlook is not “bright”.

Before the occupying troops entered Berdyansk, all our military had already been transferred to strengthen the positions of Mariupol.

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<sup>50</sup> Here, attack of the Russian forces.

The city was empty from a military point of view. The acting mayor handed over the city without firing a shot, and so the “orcs distributed notes” for the rehearsal of the “Russian World”. Later, military personnel entered the city and spread throughout the administrative institutions. They took everything under their full control. For example, on the site of the barracks of the National Guard of Ukraine, the “orcs” defiantly dug in and refueled heavy equipment. It happened behind our house near the fire department. I’ve bought bread nearby. After some time “they” left, but after themselves “they” mined the building. Above this building raised the flag of the USSR. Thrown back 40 years ago in development. March was cold; often with frost visible on the ground. We slept in an embrace under jackets and a blanket. Steam was coming out of the room. I only took off my hat to wash my hair. And most of all, after March 8, the “orcs” began to FREE US FROM ALL THE BENEFITS OF CIVILIZATION. They disconnected the main channel of the wired Internet. They turned on their TV and radio broadcasts. Damn propaganda!

Later, the gas pipeline near Mariupol was interrupted. We were left without gas for more than a month. There was an electric stove. It saved us. We’re cooking. It taught us to think “a kilometer ahead”. We prepared a full bath with water so that there was something to wash off the feces in a toilet. It came in handy. Water pumps didn't work without electricity. Water was provided by the hour. The lights began to turn off more often. It’s consumption has increased. Refugees from Mariupol came in batches. The load on the power lines has increased. Electronic transformers were broken. And it is not possible to establish power supply from Zaporozhye. This is war. Public utilities service-workers, like magicians, repaired it.

There were fewer products, and prices increased by 2–5 times. There was no price regulator. Only cash was still in use in the city. ATMs have become outcasts. The reason is simple – a weak connection to the network, or its absence as such. ATMs have become a



luxury. We withdrew 1000 hryvnias, taking a queue at A-Bank. The procedure took 2 days. We bought food.

Those who did not want to collude were fired from their jobs and the enterprises were frozen. The food and trade business worked only by agreement with the occupiers for a rollback<sup>51</sup> of 20 to 60 % of the profits. Leisure could be spent by the sea or on a bench during the allotted hours according to the curfew. Apparently total control is their religion. We went to rallies. They ended with my acquaintance from a travel agency being taken for interrogation, his friend was shot with a machine gun in his legs; wounded. I didn't see them ever again. And these were peaceful rallies. It turned out that the flag and civil position are stronger than the machine gun and smoke screens.

The city was filled with “little green” and “black men”. It got warmer. Russians took off their helmets. It's too hot for them. A dumb passer-by flatteringly treated the “orcs” with coffee. I saw it. I nearly threw up. In a metaphorical sense. My eyes were full of anger. Hey people, why are you like this, huh? I am lucky, I managed to buy two backup SIM cards in the first week of the War. When a humanitarian corridor through Berdyansk was announced on April 4, national telecom operators were immediately turned off: lifecell, Kyivstar, Vodafone. They did it intentionally to misinform the population. The Ukrainian side sent 15 buses, and 150 people came to the evacuation. Gave time to collect. And people did not even know that the buses were standing and waiting. So, it became unimaginably expensive and difficult to survive. But the DESIRE TO LIVE conquered the fear of staying, that is, hanging forever in this active regime of continuous stagnation: socio-economic, cultural, political, military, emotional.

Before moving out, I consulted with a female friend who went on the route through Pologi and Orekhov. On the sixth of April I've

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<sup>51</sup> Here, kickback or bribe.

shaved off my beard. I sewed a flash drive into the girl's boot, under the fur lining. I hid my bank cards in pads and put them at the bottom of my suitcase. We hid our SIM cards deep in her makeup. Netbook wrapped in a scarf. On the seventh of April we were ready to leave. We learned that the humanitarian corridor was supposedly open. At 10:07 a text message came that "YES". I decided to call a taxi. No connection. Internet and even more so. They try to silence a signal, bitc\*\*\*! So, the action has begun. I ran out to the parking lot, where there were cars that could take us to the exit from the city. The meeting place is 1.5 km further, on the ring road near the village of Azov. Buses do not enter the city. They are not allowed to enter. From the third time I stopped some folk and asked to be taken away. For some reason he agreed. Price 200 UAH. In general, this service in a taxi would cost 1000 UAH. Drive 15 minutes. I didn't have a budget. I have 100 UAH left. This was equivalent to 1 kg of sugar or 3 kg of potatoes.

We arrived. Dropped off. We walked with two suitcases up the hill for 600 meters. Difficult. Stopped. Drove up to the ring road. We were waiting for the bus for 5 hours. The column was not allowed to pass near Vasilievka. There were strong fights. A car with the "Z" symbol arrived and said that no one is allowed to be on the highway until 18:00, otherwise those people will be punished! Some went to spend the night at a gas station; someone went back to the town. We went on foot to the second village from the place of evacuation, to Dmitrovka. The wheel on the suitcase has worn off. Hands broke off to drag it. We walked 800 meters out of 6 km. Picked up a ride and drove to the village. There they settled in a school class on mattresses in the amount of 24 people. There were three meals a day. Pearl barley. I liked compote. Bread is in short supply. This went on for 5 days in a row.

At the same time, we were looking for an opportunity to leave by a private carrier in a minibus. To do this, we found a carrier for

1000 UAH per person. The girlfriend mother threw off 3000 UAH to her credit card. I went to look for someone who can give cash, and we will transfer it to the credit card in exchange. I met a woman who fertilized flowers. Lived near the school. She posted the news on Facebook and one family responded for a 15 % commission. So we received 2000 UAH, and gave 2300 UAH them for cashing out. Satisfied we will leave soon, we understand that the driver did not arrive on April 11, he does not pick up the phone. Funds are safe, but we were “fooled”; all 16 who want to leave the town.

I spat saliva to the side. I'm thinking. SMS message arrives that evacuation is possible only by our own transport. We don't have one. Alas... The time is 11:41 AM. I make a tactically correct decision to run to the road and catch a ride. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, the domestic car stopped. A man was driving. On the passenger seat, his wife covered with icons. I approached and asked to take us for money. He thought for a long time. And agreed. I told him: “15 minutes, and we will be here with you”. I ran a kilometer at full speed to school. I was out of breath out of habit. Distracted the girl from the conversation. We took the trunks, and went out onto the road. Crossed the road, I looked insolently for some folk on the yard. I've asked him to take the suitcases and my beloved to that car on the road, for the last 100 UAH, and I will run. He said that a pack of cigarettes would be enough. It took us two trips back and forth. We thanked. Unloaded. We started packing into the new car again. Two suitcases took their place in the passenger seat at the back; a bag with kitchen utensils went in the trunk. Then I jumped in a car first, and then my girl into my arms. In order not to beat her head while driving, I took her as if in a cocoon. When we drove a couple of kilometers, we saw overturned and shot cars on the roadsides; the remains of a minibus blown up by a mine. Enemy tanks were on their way.

I went through 17 block posts. I was checked notably, down to my underpants, so to speak, when it was necessary and not necessary. They asked questions, looked at luggage, leafed through documents

without exception and, of course, looked for prohibited files on our phones. And at the sixth checkpoint, they carried out an inspection of things, while a column of cars drove sharply. They were accompanied by “orcs” in civilian clothes. By all indications, it was a paid column to Zaporozhye. War is business. We just decided to follow them. And the subsequent journey became much faster and easier. From the thought that everything is bought and sold like this at the behest and desire, a chill went down the back. After 5 hours of travel, we lost the column. The car stalled. We switched from gas to petrol. And we went to look for the convoy. We caught up with the column. Russian troops pulled together heavy equipment and infantry. They were not up to us. Evening time began, preparations were made for battles in the Pologovsky district. We waited out the volleys and accelerated. An hour later we were met by the Ukrainian side. Ukrainian checkpoint. Hooray!!! In Zaporozhye, the Ukrainian police escorted us. It was warm at heart. It started raining heavily. I was checked through the Security Service of Ukraine portal. Clean. We moved our belongings to the evacuation bus. For the night we were placed in one of the kindergartens in the city of Zaporozhye. My girl ate and went to talk with her family. I didn't have that opportunity. I took a fork, raised it at the level of my wet eyes and began to examine and twist.

You know, people, I couldn't understand then, and even now it is not clear for me: how much more evidence is needed for the world community to recognize the genocide and declare the Putin regime in the Russian Federation as a sponsor of terrorism? Let's take a moment of silence for more than 200 children who will never go to kindergarten. In a week or so, this exact route will be closed. There will be no “green corridors” until the end of April. Due to impossibility of travel. Fighting intensified; In addition, the road was washed out by the rain. “Orcs” are evil. The Armed Forces of Ukraine succeed. Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes!

**22.02**

**D**ear Friends, I finally found some free time and want to say a few words. I am really grateful for your indifference, concern and support, which I have been receiving over the past few weeks in various messaging services. No, we are not going to leave Kyiv, and please do not persuade us, as such discussions are destructive and can only lead to stress, which girls and I try to avoid in every way. Believe me, the situation in the city is stable. Public transport is overcrowded, there are traffic jams on the roads, performances are being played in theaters, children go to schools and kindergartens, shops are full of fresh bread and other goods, etc. Nobody is going to panic here, let alone die. I understand your concern though. Of course, it's not unreasonable. But please do respect our decision. Not even our decisions, but my kids. They are mature enough and can decide what is better for them. I send you a big hug and best regards.

**24.02**

I will only report what I witnessed. In the morning I woke up because of explosions. There were at least three of them. Around seven o'clock the sirens began to wail. Around nine o'clock there were a lot of cars on the roads, headed towards the exit from the city. In the morning a lot of expensive cars left Nowopeczerski Lipki (VIP estate). There are only few cars on the streets now. As well as people. At the entrance to the building, a current map with shelters marked on it was displayed. Grocery stores are open. Some are queued, some are not. Groceries are available, a drugstores are also available. People are a bit depressed but kind and supportive. I haven't seen queues to ATMs. There are, however, queues to pharmacies. Post

offices are closed. The explosions have resumed within the last hour. There is no smoke or fire in sight. Just a sound. There was another one a moment ago. All the city lights I have seen today have the flags of Ukraine, which is encouraging. The neighbors I met today and all the other people I spoke to today are convinced that we will win. And it will definitely happen.

## 25.02

Somewhere around two o'clock in the morning the explosions were heard again. At seven in the morning the siren wailed again. My mother, who lives near the building on which a shot down Russian plane fell this morning, waited for a long time in the bathroom, as residents were called to do so.

## 25.02

When *Nelunia* at bedtime, along with the traditional 'sweet dreams', said 'I hope to see you tomorrow', only this quote from one of the 13 Ukrainian border guards who died heroically yesterday defending the Island of Snakes comes to mind.

## 26.02

The Pechersk Territorial Defense Unit works like a watch. It is known where, to whom and how. The man on duty saved my telephone number and said they would call when needed. Local residents check streets, yards and roofs. We also checked ours with our neighbors. Military men guard roads and bridges. Everything is under control. As an extended curfew was announced (from 5pm Saturday to 8am Monday), people went to grocery stores. Queues are. I won't say that they are too long, but they are. Food is generally there. There may be a problem with the choice. Everyone is constructive and confident that we will win. So help us God!

## 27.02

No changes with us. Explosions. Sirens. Sirens. Explosions. Comments for the Polish media. I am writing this post to the Friends of Varsovians. You can't even imagine how we miss you sometimes

(except in these last days). We sincerely thank you for your prayers, support and constant invitations, but let us use them after the end of the war and the expulsion of the Russian occupiers from Our Land. Can you imagine the iron girls from Żelazna agreeing to leave Kyiv now?

**27.02**

Olenka's film "Strona" about the Great Famine, organized by the Russians for Ukrainians in the 1930s, will be shown in Japan. The film festival in Japan organizes screenings of Ukrainian films to make Japanese aware of history of our country. Still someone can say that culture has nothing to do with politics?

**27.02**

Please don't laugh. On February 21, I took austerity to refrain from using bad words. Today, the first 'b\*tch'. flew out of my mouth without holding back. I start everything from the beginning. I dedicate a new austerity to our victory and I will endure it. My word of honor, I will endure.

**28.02**

There will be nothing from me for now. I will only quote the current and proven information from the Minister of Health of Ukraine. The Russian occupiers, starting on February 24, 2022, killed 352 civilians, 16 of whom were children. Injured – 2040 people, of whom 45 are children.

**28.02**

Last Wednesday my girls and I were still wondering who of us would be more comfortable entering the store and buying donuts. On Thursday, only after 7 p.m., we remembered about unpaid donuts and it was our first Fat Thursday in our lives, without donuts. Today, according to the Orthodox tradition, the so-called Buttery (so to speak, it's a Fat Thursday that lasts for a week and during which they eat not donuts but crepes). Moreover, Maslana's apogee is the ceremony of burning the field fear. I wonder if the

Russian Orthodox people will be able to burn their fear (in all meanings)? Will it leave it to the Ukrainians?

Meanwhile, Kyiv is slowly running out of food in stores, there is also a problem with buying food for animals, pharmacies are usually closed (there is a special map of active pharmacies), post offices are still closed, and the sale of alcohol is banned from tomorrow. Anti-aircraft explosions and alarms are already the order of the day, as are queues to shops. Contrary to the above-mentioned and general fatigue, the Kievians are hopeful and are counting down the hours until the end of the war. I tell you. It is high time to burn the fear.

### 1.03

With their criminal order to mine and blow up the central part of Kyiv in September 1941, the Russians caused the troops of Nazi Germany to “solve the Jewish question” in Babyn Yar. With their criminal policy of oblivion, the Russians shot Babin Yar for the second time. Today, the Russians shot Babin Yar for the third time.

The Russians are going to bomb St. Sophia here, fools. And how many times can they repeat? Go away!

In 1918, my grandmother Wanda hid from the shelling of the Red Russians in the walls of Sofia of Kyiv with her mother. Once upon a time, I already told this story here, when she asked her mother only to let her look at the bread. Saint Sophia then protected them and in the evening my grandmother received a slice of bread from a nun who, hearing little Wanda's request, walked around Kyiv all day in search of bread. A hundred years later, on the eve of the Russian invasion, the girls and I specially went to Sofia and spent the whole day in its blessed walls. And during the whole day they asked Her, the Intercessor of Kyiv, to save the City and the people of Kyiv. And it will happen, because She is immovable!

I have no Russian friends in my friends, except for one, and even he left St. Petersburg for Europe in the nineties. But perhaps some of you have them, and for the first time I will ask you to distribute my post.



Yesterday I saw a story on Russian TV and was amazed at the distortion of information, since the military aggression of the Russian Federation against the peaceful population of Ukrainian towns and villages was called an internal conflict, and the Russian occupiers were called liberators. In this regard, all the appeals of Russian opinion leaders, in which there is no mention of the fact that the Russian army attacked Ukraine, that it is Putin and his team who are the instigators and culprits of what is happening, are not worth a penny. Calls to “stop the war”, “come to an agreement”, “stop” – who is it addressed to? “I’m crying”, “I’m for peace”, “people are dying”, “they are shooting at civilians” – these are just words with which you just want to cover yourself in the future, to show how “fearless” you are. Evil has a name. Evil must be called by its name. Because all these anonymous appeals can already be used today by your lying mass media, which did not even bother to inform you that 5,840 of your soldiers who invaded Ukraine with weapons have already been killed, and that their bodies would be nice pick up – they don't say either.

### 3.03

Kyivhlib works promptly and not only by supplying bread to the people of Kyiv, but also by carrying out an urgent rebranding of “Belarusian” bread. From now on, he is “Otamanskyi”. Bravo!

As for the situation in our little family, tonight was an exceptional night, because for the first time we saw four flying rockets in the immediate vicinity of our windows, and now we know that the red sky is not only at dawn and at sunset.

### 3.03

Even yesterday, it seemed to me that it made sense to appeal to the Russians not to be silent and to go out into the streets and squares. After another night shelling of Kyiv, it dawned on me. These appeals do not make any sense. No one will say anything there, and even more so, no one will go anywhere. For many of

them, turning off Apple Pay or Spotify, canceling vacations in Spain and shopping in Milan is more important. You can log into Instagram and see for yourself. They do not see the cause-and-effect relationship at all and do not understand that their military aggression against our country is directly related to their inconveniences. Young Russians ask rhetorical questions about what they are here for and what their lives have in common before the war with Ukraine. In the future, these questions will grow into hatred, and Russians will consider Ukraine, not themselves, to be the main cause of isolation. Their infantile approach to solving the Putin issue is simply surprising. They shifted its solution to us. They consider themselves victims of the regime and are ready to patiently watch what is happening in the future. If they like this political BDSM so much, then they would continue to play their perverted games and not let their violent psychopaths out.

### 5.03

I really love the beginning of March, because on the 4th my dear Godfather was born, on the 7th my beloved Grandfather, and on the 5th Stalin died. Today is March 5... well, you got the idea.

### 5.03

According to the Gregorian calendar, Great Lent is already underway, and according to the Julian calendar, tomorrow is Forgiveness Sunday, and I can't even imagine if and when Ukraine will be able to forgive.

### 7.03

Today we had the opportunity to buy fresh bread thanks to the people who baked bread during the war. Today, in Makarów near Kiev, the Russian occupiers demolished the Bakery Plant. 13 associates were killed.

#closethesky #NATO

### 7.03

Sorry for the question.

Does anyone really believe in the story and repentance of Russian prisoners of war?

**14.03**

Do you know what client orientation is in Kyiv? This is when a sheet hangs on the door of a pharmacy for three days with the question “why do we need such a pharmacy that is closed during the war?”, and on the fourth day it opens and another sheet appears on its door, on which information about the hours of operation is printed.

**17.03**

Today is the eighteenth day of my austerity for not using bad words for the sake of the Victory of Ukraine. I'm holding on, man, but I'm not shaking. Victory is very close! I believe in it!

**23.03**

“anti-tank hedgehogs of the Second World War are no longer a museum exhibit” or “secondhand in the Kyiv style”.

## Letters from Ukraine

Since the first day of the war, I have had no other work than military work. Whatever I do, everything is subject to the state of war in which the country is. I am no longer working on a novel (my novel about Crimea 1992–2014 was supposed to be finished this year and published at the beginning of the next one). Of course, I don't travel with literary performances in the towns of Ukraine (one of them, with two other authors – as part of the Ukrainian PEN project – was scheduled for March 9–10; when the war started, we cancelled all arrangements). I don't read books. I don't watch movies (before the war, I enjoyed the TV series “The Crown” about Queen Elizabeth in the evenings). I don't walk in parks and forests. I don't even edit reports and interviews - this was my main work before the war.

Work during the war, work for victory, I divide by colors. “White” is with texts and information, the most familiar to me, only during the war – texts mostly in foreign languages. I write columns, give interviews, formulate and translate messages, work as a fixer: I accompany a foreign journalist, help him in the preparation of reports.

“Black” work is actually war, slaughter, work on the battlefield, including the work of doctors. I don't take her on – I can't, I can't imagine myself doing it. However, to be more precise, I had no idea on the first day of the war, but when I found out what the Russians were doing in my country, I rejected my pacifism and nevertheless prepared the material for Molotov cocktails.

There is still work between “white” and “black”. No, not “gray” – “purple”. “Purple” is the color of longing. Purple work is work with people, with the victims, with those who have just come out of shelling, who are fleeing from hell to a peaceful place, although in reality there is nowhere to go. It seemed to me: white work is too white. And the injured people are in great need of support. I felt obliged to take up purple work too.

So, I went to the station. Lviv station, which since its foundation (1861), perhaps, has not seen more people than today. People come to the Lviv railway station from all over Ukraine: most of them want to go further abroad. The minority – to stay in Lviv or nearby towns and villages.

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I'll allow myself a little humour, it's “black”, because now all humour is “black”: volunteering at the station can be compared to working at a book fair: you stand by a tent, as if at a stand, wait for someone to approach you, answer questions. Or you see eyes looking for help and ask yourself: “Can I tell you something?”. You tell where to get on the bus to Poland, where to get on the train to Poland, yes, you answer, they are free. “Where to stay?” – here are the telephone numbers of district administrations, go there, register; yes, you can be accommodated at a family's house, you can be accommodated at a gym or at the theatre on folding beds.

You can compare this volunteering to working at a book fair, until you remember that there is a war going on. That each of these people, whose questions you answer, has experienced something terrible. Shelling, bombing, loss of one's home, threat of losing one's home. Or even worse: the loss of loved ones. Or saying goodbye to loved ones (women go abroad with children, because men aged 18 to 60 do not have the right to leave Ukraine; many of them remain to fight). You remember that everyone leaves because of hopelessness, from the fact that life should be saved.

As long as you are standing talking, then nothing. And then – a kaleidoscope of faces and questions floats in memory. I was afraid that I would cry right there, during the conversations. But no – I cry later, already at home. And in the evening, I can't sleep for a long time, I lie in bed in the same room with my mother and sister, sometimes – with someone else from the refugees – I look into the darkness and sigh.

There are questions more difficult than about trains to Poland and resettlement. A man from Kharkiv with a blond, crying three-year-old boy in his arms: “My son is growing up without a mother, he only has me, his father. Do you think I will be released abroad? I can stay in Ukraine as well – the most important thing for me is that the baby is well, but if there was a boarding house for babies somewhere – so that I could leave him there for a certain time and work. You don't know if there are any boarding houses or kindergartens that would accept refugee's children?...”

An intelligent woman in her 50s asks: “Can you tell me where my mother can get medical help? We were supposed to go, but I'm afraid she won't make it. Can I go to a hospital somewhere in Lviv first?” (cries).

One elderly woman fixed her eyes on mine as if she was holding me with her hands. “Think of something: how can I take my granddaughter from a village in the Mykolaiv region?” (this is a very “hot” area, the Russians do not lose hope of capturing it, there is constant shelling, kidnapping). I am looking at the schedule of evacuation trains. There is from the Dnipro. But how to get from Mykolaiv to the Dnipro, between which there are 322 kilometers and a dangerous zone? How to get from the village to Mykolaiv? I honestly answer the woman that I don't know. She looks at me imploringly: my granddaughter, she says, is very beautiful, talented, she cannot be allowed to die. Come up with something, she asks me, you have to come up with something, you are a volunteer, give me your contact, you will come up with something.

...Once at the station, I met two women – a mother and a daughter – during a question-and-answer session. Looking for a place to spend the night. I already have refugees at home, but two more – somehow we will fit.

My new guests are refugees from Kharkiv. It's hell now. These women lived for two weeks under the constant accompaniment of bombs and rockets. A nearby house caught fire before their eyes, after an impact that made them think a missile had hit their house. Dead bodies of townspeople lie on the streets. When another, long-arrived, refugee in my house dries her hair with a hair dryer, I think: this sound will definitely frighten the new arrivals. When an unsecured door slams, I think: it will definitely frighten the newcomers.

...Guests thank me, but I don't really understand why. I always say: this is our common problem, and everyone should help everyone.

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I always remember that I am in a more privileged position than most. My city is not being bombed yet, my city is not being shot at yet. I am at home, while my mother and sister, who came to see me on the third day of the war, are not at home. The other refugees I accept are even more so. My sister came from near Kyiv and knew that her apartment may not be available at any moment (*may God have mercy*).

Sister is afraid that the Russians will attack Western Ukraine as well. I think that Putin will try to do this. Of course, he plans it! So far, only the fierce resistance of the Ukrainian army is stopping him. Yes, the Russians are demotivated and poorly armed – but there are so many of them, and Putin, although not strong, but how mean!!!!... Therefore, the issue of an offensive on Western Ukraine, the one that is near the borders of Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary is only a matter of time.

Until they come, I am here in Lviv. My sister is afraid that when they attack, other countries will already be so full of refugees from

Ukraine that we will have nowhere to run. My sister and I fear not so much death as repression and torture. From books, documents, and testimonies, we know well what the Russians are capable of, and we have no doubt that they will use repression and torture. The sister says: we should go now, while other countries accept refugees. He says yes, but he doesn't go. She is very attached to Ukraine, the leader of the public movement "Don't be indifferent!", she walked around many small and large cities in all regions of the country with her own feet, brought them stacks of books, CDs with patriotic films with her own hands. She organized cultural events there, communicated with people. She knows someone from every bombed and shelled city and town. It is difficult for her to decide to leave Ukraine, for which she has done so much all her life. But she is afraid to stay.

I am also afraid, but there is a significant difference between us. Here, in Lviv, which is not under fire, but also threatened, I am at home. I currently live where my stuff lives. When it's cold I wear my warm clothes, when it's warm I wear my cooler clothes. I brew my coffee and cocoa the way I like it in my pot. I wash in my bathtub, wash things in my washing machine (now more than ever, because there are many residents). Just being at home calms me down. More than that! I don't think I've ever tasted hot chocolate that I make on my stove like this. I have never enjoyed hot water from my shower so much. Yes, I know about the hungry and burned in the besieged Mariupol, where people die of dehydration because there is no water, electricity, or gas, and the city is constantly bombarded. I remember this – and a piece does not stick in my throat. But I know that in this situation I can't do anything, I can't help in any way, no matter how much I give products and money.

That's why they still eat that hot chocolate in their kitchen. They eat borscht prepared by mother or sister for everyone who is currently in our house. I wash the floor every two days – and I'm



glad that I wash MY floor. I walk familiar streets, I know every alley, every building, hole in the asphalt, every tree here. I can meet up with friends, most of whom are still staying here. We have a common language, common jokes, common memes, common trouble. Can it be like this abroad? As long as I can use this privilege – to be in MY city, place, next to MINE – I use it. I don't know how much longer I can use it.

My foreign passport and other essentials are always in my shoulder bag, the shoulder bag is next to the bed I sleep on.

February 27, 2022

**Facebook post:**

<https://www.facebook.com/ira.tsilyk/posts/5609891769046971>

I will post my reply to my relative from Russia. And I will put an end to this. “Hi. In fact, I think we are now in different worlds. I understand with my mind that you see everything there with a different optics, and this was preceded by a long-term process of immersion in this inverted reality. And I don’t even know how to explain what exactly is happening to us now... But I have never seen such unity of the entire civil society as it is now in Ukraine. The whole country has united in the fight against this wild war. In fact, I believe that we are talking about the fight against fascism. You know, the Germans also did not realize until the very end what a trap of their own illusions and alternative reality they fell into, the insight was terrifying. And it is no coincidence that I draw these parallels, Putin also spoke today that he “assumed responsibility for resolving the Ukrainian issue instead of future generations”. This rhetoric... This is the rhetoric of Hitler, who spoke about the “Jewish question”. And I’m not exaggerating. We all really think so. And now the rest of the civilized world, which has realized a lot and is going to send Russia into isolation. We are supported by the whole, ALL of Europe, and many other countries. Putin today announced the readiness of nuclear weapons. Well, this is the dirtiest blackmail, which also testifies to Putin’s agony. But what will happen next, no one knows.

In the meantime, we are witnessing right here, in my Ukraine, in my Kyiv, crimes of a terrifying scale. We are being bombarded with hailstones (have you ever heard the sound of “hailstones”? And my son heard and trembled in horror, sitting on the floor in the corridor). The Russians are firing heavy artillery at residential areas, at hospitals, kindergartens, orphanages. Believe me, it's true. There is a huge amount of evidence, it all draws on an international tribunal. And, in fact, you can't even imagine the scale of the Ukrainians' hatred for the Russians, who created these last three days. You really don't even know. Millions of people have united in resistance, and their hatred for the enemy is so great that even a few subsequent generations will not fix it. I'm not exaggerating. And I think that in fact it is a tragedy and a catastrophe. But this hatred is understandable when they attack us without warning at 4 in the morning and start bombing our cities, killing civilian children.

At the same time, the losses of the Russian army are huge. Your news talks about 1–2, but, in fact, it is already more than 4000 people. A large amount of Russian equipment has been destroyed, several hundred of your soldiers have been taken prisoner, and the video of their interrogation is available in the public domain. There are a lot of boys, pathetic, frightened, who themselves do not understand what happened. They were being prepared for an easy victory, as in the Crimea, but they suddenly ran into a strong army and tough resistance from millions of ordinary people who are ready to tear them with their teeth because they are defending their land. And the fact that Putin began to blackmail the world with nuclear weapons only says that he did not expect such a scenario either. The blitzkrieg failed, the “strongest army” could not take a single large Ukrainian city, and the losses are horrendous. Soon Russian mothers will howl, but the horror is that even the bodies of their children will not be brought to them. The Ukrainians turned to the Red Cross with a request to organize the sending of dead bodies back to Russia,

because Russia does not take them. These guys are cannon fodder! However, as always in Russia.

In general, I think I will never visit St. Petersburg. And not only me. We cannot know exactly how this terrible war will end. But in any case, some new Ukraine was born before my eyes, which will never let itself be conquered and will never forgive the Russians for this war. And this is not jingoistic patriotism. It is a natural response to the desire to destroy our freedom, our identity, our dignity. The myths about the Nazis and Bandera are simply ridiculous. But over the past three days, we all here have turned into some kind of "Bandera" – and I, and my mother, and Sveta, and every person I know. I'm afraid this is the point of no return. And I don't know why I'm writing you such a long letter. I guess I'm just really bitter, but I know you're not too eager to see things through our eyes (considering what your mom was saying to my mom recently).

If you want to read news from our side, look at photographs of the defeated Russian army (only there are a lot of corpses there too), videos with prisoners, make sure that at least in this your president is lying to you, let me know, and I can drop you some links. Perhaps you should at least try to look at everything a little from the other side. And if not, well, we're fine. If we consider it normal that my husband was forced to go to war again, my son now knows what shelling and bomb shelters are, mom, dad and Sveta sleep in the corridor on the floor, and I look out the window at night at how the oil depot is burning, in which a Russian rocket flew in, and I understand that all these man-made and environmental disasters are not even the worst thing when we are also threatened with nuclear weapons. In general, everything is fine with us, yes.

She didn't answer.

## **Diary posts on Facebook**

### **February 27, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/bogdana.romantsova/posts/2320282168113821>

The other day I saw incredible examples of humanity. People standing by the road with a cardboard “Sandwiches and coffee”. The inscription “Toilet and water here” on an old house. Photos of hundreds, thousands of acquaintances who joined the Territorial Defense Forces and Armed Forces, including my father. Women descending into the bomb shelter, gently holding their cats in blankets. Unconditional openness and support. Beautiful faces, shining eyes, surprisingly calm children who understood everything. And not a single compromise, no one said: “We would have given that to stop the war”.

They will never defeat us, we are just from different planets. And I hope that for the next hundred years after our victory, fucking Russians will be afraid to say where they are from.

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### **March 3, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/bogdana.romantsova/posts/2323749027767135>

I put my grandmother on the bus, who was crying because not a single thing was left of her house in Gostomel.

A young mother with a 5-month-old baby, whom she held so tightly. She was holding a tiny suitcase with her other hand – I don't even know what went in there. This is the time to set priorities.

A mother with a teenage boy, who was very worried about the cat, which they took turns carrying in a carrier. Will this cat be missed for sure? How will the cat be at the border? “We are nowhere without a cat, please clarify”, she asked.

We saw a father who wanted to go with his wife who was about to give birth. And we honestly told him that a man of his age would most likely not be allowed abroad. He just stood nearby, looking around in confusion: “How is she there without me, she will soon give birth, right now, this is a foreign country, like herself?”.

We have seen people repeating that they have lost everything. And a young, very beautiful couple who came up to me (the Red Cross jacket is another magnet) and said: “We heard that someone leaves cats here when they go abroad. We came to pick up a cat to love”.

I have seen so many tears and hope these days than I have seen in 30 years. I was hugged by complete strangers. And I hugged back. When the list paper ran out, the other volunteers tore off a piece of the cardboard box to keep us going.

I said dozens of times: “Happy road, it's easy to get to you” – and not a single word was a formula of politeness.

Everything here is so real and so alive. All of you people are so beautiful. Such cannot be overcome.

I love.

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**March 4, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/bogdana.romantsova/posts/2324494334359271>

A woman came to us yesterday. She cried so much that I was even scared. She told through tears that she was leaving Kharkiv by train, and at that moment the train was being fired upon by the occupiers. A train with civilians. With a bunch of kids.

Another was wondering if she should stay overnight at the station to try to catch any transport to the border in the morning. She had a three-month-old son in her arms.

Then the father came and asked if there was any medicine, because the child could not calm down for the two days they were on the road. I asked how old the child is. It turned out that 22 days.

I was left with a boy who is ten. I asked what was the most important thing he took with him. The boy answered that a guinea pig. She is 2.5 years old and her name is Vasya.

A man from Kazakhstan said that he worked for a long time and was finally able to open his own sweet shop in Kharkiv. "But now there's probably nothing left of it, right? Do you think they'll hire me in Poland? I just want to work, that's all".

I keep this diary. Diary of crimes against all bright and good people. Diary of their and my hope.

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### **March 5, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/bogdana.romantsova/posts/2325310487610989>

Volunteering in the CHC is not only about leading a convoy, getting on buses, writing on a list, standing on duty near tents. And, for example, to wash banyaks<sup>52</sup>. Have you ever washed very greasy banyaks<sup>53</sup> in the cold without detergents, on the road, near a cistern with boiling water, when dozens, hundreds of refugees push past you?

What can I say? My only coat now smells of bogrács, and it's better not to look at the sleeves. But even these banyaks<sup>54</sup> are a tiny step towards victory.

Russian cabbage soup "schee"<sup>55</sup> is going to hell.

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<sup>52</sup> Cast-iron pots.

<sup>53</sup> Same.

<sup>54</sup> Same.

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**March 6, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/bogdana.romantsova/posts/2326053794203325>

A young girl came up, crying. I ask how to help: tea, food, a bus to Poland, medicine. She shakes her head. She says that his relatives in Mariupol have not been in touch with her for a day. Then she apologizes for the tears. Like: “how much you can cry?”. I honestly confess to her that I cry myself in the bathroom after shifts. We all need our own bathroom – in order to cry.

A lively girl in pink, 5 years old, smiles. I know the girl: I gave her a small Milka yesterday when I was pouring coffee in the food tent. I will definitely remember her hat with ears. The girl speaks Russian but answered in Ukrainian: “Thank you”.

I take care of an older lady, an engineer from Kharkiv, who has worked in scientific institutions all her life. She says that last time she was in Lviv, when Chernobyl exploded. They stopped near the cathedral. Before getting into a taxi, she said: “God, protect Ukraine, don’t let “them” bomb Lviv, it is so beautiful”.

A woman from Kharkiv asks about shelters. I tell and suggest to leave for the Polish border. She can’t: all the passports were burned, a missile hit the house. She withdraws the pension ID – the only document left. Along with it, an icon of the Virgin Mary, a simple calendar, falls out on the ground.

I am not a believer, but for their sake I am ready to believe.

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<sup>55</sup> Russian: “schee”.



## Diaries on Facebook

**February 26, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/chapeye/posts/10158739438858437>

**A** short letter to some Western intellectuals and some people on the “left”. Please share to whom it may concern.

I can't write anything long because we're still on the run with kids who are now right here next to me. So, it's very short: Ukraine was not “dragged into” war, it was attacked. Without even a pretext similar to Hitler's attack on Poland.

I know other countries have had their share of imperialism, right now you're witnessing over Russian imperialism.

I don't want to make flawed historical comparisons here, but I'll say that empires had lost wars against smaller nations before, and in the end Russian imperialist government must lose now.

When you're being bombed, when you're thinking of ways to evacuate your kids, it's a different level of analysis than when you're being smart and ironic, sitting in a safe academic office somewhere at MIT. Yes, Mr. Noam Chomsky, I'm looking at you, among others. I started as a volunteer translator of “Responsibility of intellectuals” into Ukrainian, so now I'm really pissed about how he mentions in one sentence the background: “and yes, Russia had to occupy Crimea eight years ago to protect its naval base”. What if the US occupied Baja California? Be responsible, intellectuals.

Before “overthrowing capitalism sometime”, think of ways for us here not to be slaughtered because “any war is bad”.

If you're on the left, listen to the local voices here in the periphery, not some sages in the core of this worldwiev system.

If you're on the left, when doing analysis, please start with the suffering of millions of people, rather than geopolitical chess. Start with the columns of refugees, people with their kids and the elderly and pets. Start with those kids in the cancer hospital in Kyiv who are now in bomb shelters missing their chemotherapy.

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**February 27, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/chapeye/posts/10158741294473437>

On the first day, fleeing with kids, I couldn't find words. Words failed me. Now, when kids are safe and I realised. that's because it's time to action.

Russians: as long as we hold “them”<sup>56</sup> by the hands, beat “them”<sup>57</sup> in the heart, free yourself. it's better than being remembered as “Russian-fascist invaders”, right?

Friends, In Galicia there is a long queue of volunteers at the district military headquarters. In front of me was a guy who also has two children. Even before him – uncles who had just taken women and children abroad, and themselves came to beg to fight. Whatever happens in the coming days, we will win.

Here at the military commissariat, they even sort out, overtired, someone told us: “what are you doing here, you don't know how to do anything”. But they took me in the Military Forces. I can't tell you the details, of course, but I'm a military man now. Well, I'll ask for a pseudo “Pacifist”. I'll be honest with you:

I hate war in all its forms

Physical, psychological, spiritual

Emotional, environmental

I hate war

And I hate having to struggle, I, I am, I honestly do

Because I am, I wish I had been born into a world where it's unnecessary

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<sup>56</sup> Here: invaders/pro-war officials.

<sup>57</sup> Same.

This context of struggle and being a warrior and being a struggler

Has been forced on me by oppression

Otherwise, I would be a, a sculptor, or a gardener, carpenter etc.

You know, I would be free to be so much more

I guess part of me or a part of who I am, a part of what I do

It is being a warrior, a reluctant warrior, a reluctant struggler

But I do it because I'm committed to life

We can't avoid it, we can't run away from it

Because to do that [run away] is to be cowardice

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### **February 28, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/chapeye/posts/10158743496468437>

I read books about meditation for half a year, and now, after getting ready and waiting for instructions, I suddenly have time to start practicing. We have all gone out of our comfort zone and become different people. The main thing is to become better.

In recent days, I love all of us very much. We help each other. At Privatbank, they pull you a chair and give you delicious coffee, and at the next table there is a line of people who are arranging something there to help the army. At the army barracks there are buckets of fresh home-made food: "eat it, because it will disappear". And, by the way, the attitude of the officers to the privates is not at all the same as in my youth in peacetime: no preoccupation with statutes, gentleness, humanity. "While you have time, rest, here's a blanket".

Next to me is a guy who just a couple of days ago came from the civilian population with no experience, except for a short-term training – and most of them are professional, some of them were in the military for many years.

The foreman's son has just returned from his earnings all the way from Western Europe, to make a special appointment.

Sorry for the facial expression, I can't see myself with a flash.

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**March 2, post on Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/chapeye/posts/10158746316663437>

I talked with a friend that Ukraine has already won the information “blitzkrieg” at the world’s level – but I thought that it wouldn’t hurt to remain a “reflective private”. Even after joining the army, I, for example, did not get rid of a certain sense of shame that I was not doing enough, that I, as a person without combat experience, was assigned to a place statistically safer than civilians somewhere in Kharkiv. This is called survivor's guilt.

It can manifest itself in aggression towards others: for example, this “why refugees flee, not everyone fights” has already started, try to understand: this is said by people who themselves are in a safer place than Kyiv or Kharkiv, and this is aggression from fear. This feeling leaves at the same time with help.

Whoever is there now, must be there. Not everyone without experience can climb onto tanks with a Molotov. This is normal.

If you are caught in a bazaar in Galicia, “why are you here”, this is also an expression of pain and even survivor's guilt, just without reflection.

Such things are inevitable, and one should try to understand it. All the same, we are all in trouble: unarmed people tell armed invaders in Berdyansk to “go f\* yourself”, women in Romenskyi district told “go f\* yourself” to the armed dudes in a military armour. Who can do that?

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**March 4, Facebook post:**

<https://www.facebook.com/chapeye/posts/10158749198663437>

The most important thing is communication, losing a phone is almost as scary as losing documents or a machine.

It is difficult in the morning. It used to be that you wake up and... it's a dream. And now you dreamed that you were taking your child to school, you woke up – it was still a war.

During the day, it immediately becomes easier from the overwhelming feeling of unity, you are a part of something big and on the good side.

And he also began to constantly say “I love you” to people regardless of gender, and, well, everyone is talking about it, the multi-layered survivor's guilt. You are a volunteer – not in the army; in the army – but not near Kiev, probably, even if it is south of Kiev or Kherson, or Kharkiv, is there still something wrong?

The feeling that even if in a specific moment is inefficient, in general, all this somehow works in a Brownian way.

And every minute I wish that all this “greatness” would end.

**I**n this war we're getting traumatized. All of us and each of us. In this war we're finding and building ourselves. All of us and each of us. In this war we're defending ourselves. All of us and each of us. This is the story of my trauma, self-growth, and defense mechanisms.

On the night of February 23, I left my apartment with an open window, lots of food in the fridge, most of my money on a shelf. I took a backpack with clothes for four days, a fancy outfit, makeup, jewellery, a camera. My friend (let's call him Y) and I were going to a concert in Khmelnytskyi, and then to visit our friend (let's call her X) in Lviv. We had return tickets for February 28. I was ready for the war.

I was ready for the war because the war did not start on February 24. I had spent the beginning of the year abroad and come back less than two weeks before. For the two weeks, I had taken part in four demonstrations and national ceremonies. I had stopped speaking Russian, even to my Russian speaking family. I had filed several complaints about Russian and imports from Russia. I had been fighting. The anxiety about the impending war was felt in the air. Some were scared. Some were concerned. Some were preparing. Some were in disbelief. My response was: "It could come any minute, so when it comes, we'll see". For the best-case scenario, I had plane tickets for March 14 and April 18. In the worst-case scenario, I would join Homeland Defense and become a hero.

I was ready for the war, I was expecting it, because the war didn't start in 2022. It had been there for my entire adult life. In 2014, finishing school and entering university, I was afraid I would never

complete the first year, because Russia would have reached Kyiv. It didn't. It didn't for 8 years. But sooner or later, it would. And it did. And I had to "see".

For the entire night before our train, Y was reading the news. First it annoyed me. Then I started to share his anxiety. Then we started supporting each other. At 5:40, at the train station, we heard two loud low bangs. I said they weren't the explosions from the news. I was wrong. We didn't sleep that night. I guess none of us did.

When we arrived in Vinnytsia (a transit station in our trip), public transport wasn't working, everything was closed, people were lining up to every ATM, there were no other trains from Kyiv. We managed to find an open coffee shop to work (I had online classes!) and went to the bus station to get to our hostel in Khmelnytskyi. There was only one ticket left. However, we just asked the bus driver to take us, paid him directly, and went as far as the bus would take us, straight to Lviv. The way took us 11.5 hours (it's supposed to take 6-7). You'd think poor us, we got shelled. The road was being repaired according to the long-term road construction plan. But for a long time we didn't know it because there, between endless fields and endless woods, there was no Internet connection. No connection means no news. It also means no way to know if your loved ones are still alive.

On the first day, I tried to clutch the straw of my peaceful life. It was essential not to let war ruin the life I had chosen and constructed. I was contacting everyone I knew. Everyone was contacting me, and I was replying. Whenever possible, I was connecting to my online classes. I lost both of my teaching jobs in a few hours, but I was planning informal, free classes. I was not cancelling our tickets home, for February 28. I was ready to never return.

By the end of the day, in Lviv, at X's place, it was obvious that my past life was lost. I didn't have a home. I didn't have a family. I

didn't have friends other than Y and X. I didn't have plans, desires, dreams. I didn't have my feelings or values. All I had was war. I had to find my place in it.

Already on the bus I understood: first and foremost, take care of yourself. If you get sick, you won't be useful, and you'll take up resources. If you go crazy, you won't be useful, and you'll take up resources. Eat even if you don't want to. Sleep even if you have to take a pill. For the first time in my life, I began to care for my health. As soon as you've taken care of yourself, take care of Ukraine. Don't rush into it. Cold-mindedly find the most reasonable way to participate in the war.

Lots of foreigners contacted me. Many wanted to help. Helping them help the army, I felt I was fighting. Some wanted interviews. Bringing a Ukrainian voice into foreign media, I felt I was fighting. Most of them were asking if I was safe. First, I believed them. I answered I was safe and started telling them our story, how we were trying to help, how we were fighting and winning, how the enemies were dying. Later I realized they didn't understand. I was safe, it was enough for them. They wanted me to be safer, for instance, abroad. They were making such a fuss over nothing. What does safety matter? Who needs safety if one doesn't have an identity? Who needs safety when one doesn't have a meaning? Who needs safety if one doesn't have Ukraine?

The main concern was to find as much use as possible of my life. The following morning, we signed up to donate blood and to learn first medical aid. We were constantly looking to volunteer. Without a job, I would soon be out of money and unable to donate to the army. It turned out I had taken some dollars with me by accident, but income is more important than cash. Before the full-scale war, I had entered a university in Germany and received a scholarship. For that, I had to go on a study trip and then go to Germany itself. I had to make the difficult decision to leave Ukraine. That's what cold-



mindful reasonable help meant at the moment. What about volunteering? Money is far from enough. By the end of the second day, I had found an online volunteering job. I was going to translate news into Hebrew. It was extremely difficult, as my Hebrew was not enough, and my Hebrew typing skills were just non-existent. In two days, I was working slowly but confidently.

On the third day we renovated a shelter. Physical labour in the beautiful weather is the best therapy. We even built a brick bed there! While having volunteers' sandwiches, we heard a siren. We took the sandwiches to our brand-new shelter. People from neighbouring houses joined us, together with their pets. It was the definition of cozy.

On the fifth day I started writing my first journalistic text, and at the same time my longest text in Hebrew. It was almost two pages long, and it took me four days. I was that inspired. I was fighting.

On the seventh day I got one of my jobs back. I had to teach Yiddish to students in Kyiv and Kherson. We had to talk. We had to talk not about the war. We talked about the war. We had all forgotten Yiddish and how to teach and study. We were fighting.

One morning I wanted to drink my yesterday's coffee, but it wasn't there. X had poured it away. I cried for hours like a child.

Before the full-scale war, I lived my entire life for myself. I did whatever I felt was right for me. I researched, I enjoyed beauty, I loved people. I valued freedom, diversity, and human rights. I left all of it in Kyiv. Now my life was just a part of the war machine. I had to stay alive and well for the machine to work. I had to be as efficient as possible for the machine to work. Every hour of work, every good dinner, every moment of inspiration made our victory a little closer. Those are not true values. I didn't have true values anymore. I wasn't the true me anymore.

On the night of March 3–4, Zaporizhzhia NPP was burning, and the firefighters were not allowed to stop the fire. I burnt together

with the NPP. I wasn't afraid to die. I wasn't afraid everyone would die. I wasn't shocked. But I burnt. The NPP was saved. I burnt till the end. After that night, I was fine with a world war, with a nuclear war, even with total destruction of Ukraine, as long as it destroyed Russia too. From then on, I didn't care about anything at all. I went to a cat café and translated the news about the NPP, while the cats were playing peacefully all around me. That was a marvelous morning.

Since then, I've crossed the border to Poland, taken two flights, studied in Israel for two weeks. Peace was hard. Planes were too white, too quiet, too slow, too safe. Everything was open, even at curfew. People were relaxed, as if there was no war. I woke up every day with the desire to go home, to hear explosions, to feel something.

The war is so long that I have to return myself before its end. I'm doing it through beauty. When I had to spend an hour in an art museum, I almost had the first panic attack in my life. I started to feel. The pain of feeling was overwhelming. I started to learn to feel. I am looking for ways to be myself and have true meaning of life while at war. Otherwise, I won't be mentally healthy enough to be useful.

## **Emptiness of hatred**

**W**e seem to have the right to hate these days. Some confidently correct – we must hate. After all, there is something for it.

Undoubtedly, there is. My native Chernihiv, for example, is bleeding, surrounded, repeatedly bombed, deprived of such seemingly inalienable benefits of civilization as electricity, water and gas supply. It turned out that I am not there, but there are my parents and a sick grandfather. My father managed to get in touch today. Told me everything he had to say in such an... unusual situation. I hope that in Chernihiv it will not be like in Mariupol, and it will not lead to starvation.

And so on and so on, on the scale of millions. My relatives are still relatively lucky. However, I will not list here all the atrocities committed by the occupiers – they are broadly covered online anyway. They are recorded as numerous photos, videos and texts that will preserve evidence of the horror for future ages. They left a lasting impression on the memory of the injured witnesses. Obviously, many tragedies are yet to come.

And we learn to hate.

An interesting discovery for me was that in the interval between air alarms, when there is relative silence, it is quite possible to analytically separate hatred “for something” from hatred “for some reason”. “For something” is, like, for every car with children crushed/shot by a Russian tank or armoured personnel carrier. Everything is clear here. Hate “for some reason” is a bit more complicated. One can hate the enemy in order to overcome the

psychological barrier to killing. Here, however, there are different opinions, and some say that for a modern professional soldier, hatred, in contrast to dosed and controlled aggression, is an undesirable emotion from a completely pragmatic point of view. However, I am not a combatant, so it is not relevant for me. A much more relevant type of hatred “for something” for a civilian is hatred to replace fear and insecurity. After all, hatred is socially more prestigious than fear.

Hatred of both kinds overwhelmed me during the first days of the war, until I resolved to renounce it as much as possible, whatever fate befell me and whatever I saw hereafter.

Seems like a naive claim, like worthless hypocritical sanctimoniousness, doesn't it? Perhaps even as a manifestation of the phenomenon known in popular culture as “Stockholm syndrome”? To me, my choice seems, relatively speaking, rational.

After all, drinking the poison of hatred in the hope that its object – real or imagined, concrete or conditional – will die from it does not make any sense. It just so happened that this, at first glance, banal truth of many great ethical systems (both religious and secular) in the conditions of a radical transformational experience became more obvious to me than ever.

Consuming the poison of hatred instead of a sedative is downright insanity.

Hatred does not allow us to see and investigate the deep causes of the disaster that happened. And it is necessary to consider those causes now, right now, and by no means “after” – God forbid you perish, being in the darkness of ignorance!

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(Non-)lyrical digression.

It is necessary to realize that Russian society does not deserve hatred – it needs treatment, a kind of “humanitarian demining”, which in the future should be carried out by known means of “soft

power”, the role of which many of us previously underestimated or did not fully understand. At the same time, all war criminals must be brought to justice in one way or another – here, “soft power” alone will, unfortunately, not be enough, but the main motivation for these actions should be, again, not hatred, but a desire out of compassion for humanity to make it impossible or at least to reduce as much as possible the probability of brutalization of future conflicts. Old and well-known instruments should be greatly improved and strengthened.

In addition, sooner or later Russia will have to go through real, if not “denazification”, then defascistification. The fact is that Putin's incarnation of Russian statehood has, without a doubt, ancestral fascist characteristics. Here, it is mainly necessary to mention the appeal when making political decisions to the virtual “Russian Slavic Orthodox” folk community, which seems to allow redrawing borders and carrying out military interventions in a voluntarist manner. The USSR is openly declared to be a “form of Great Russian statehood”. This largely correlates with Roger Griffin's definitions of fascism as “palingenetic ultranationalism” and Stanley Payne's characterization of fascism.

It is Putin's incarnation of Russian statehood that is now the biggest threat to both the Russian language and Russian culture, because it claims to have a monopoly on them and at the same time, in the eyes of the whole world, it radically discredits them with fanciful actions aimed at allegedly “protecting” them.

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Hatred, any kind of hatred at all, and the ability to see the causes of events are inversely proportional. At least, that's what I decided. I would like to live my further life with this conviction.

And I always want to see, or, perhaps, to try to see, to try to see something. My eyes are my working tool, and my hatred is an unacceptable obstacle that devalues all the efforts of pre-war life.

Do I keep my own promise? Will I be able to reduce my hatred as much as possible? To the epistemological and ethical reasons for continuing to do this, there are also therapeutic ones. Hate literally kills its bearer. But there is still so much work ahead!

Of course, the temptations are huge. However, I do not agree, even under these conditions, to be annexed by the void of hatred.

P.S. There is something sickening about the phrase “being annexed by the void of hatred”, but believe me, it is a very unpleasant process when felt from the inside. To face the risk of death while in such a mental state is quite humiliating and sad, but I have already written about something similar above.

**25.02**

**Kherson, war**

I hadn't slept yet when a fighter jet flew over us, and 30 km from Kherson a column of 299 armoured vehicles was heading towards the city.

**26.02**

The situation in Kherson

Morning in Kherson. I'm glad that they haven't forgotten about us. That is, around 6–6:30 a.m., the Russian checkpoint on the Antonivsky Bridge (BMP) was “greeted” with an airstrike. Whoever was quick ran away. Subjective observations – the city is suspended in the neutral zone. The enemy does not currently have the resources to control the situation here. On the other hand, a number of services “washed their hands”, did not listen to the mayor's orders, for example: firefighters, stupidly refused to extinguish the fire out of private buildings in Antonivka. The heart of the Ukrainian convoy was abandoned on the Melitopol highway (from the forklift beyond Oleshki in the directions to Melitopol and Arminsk) (obviously, as a result of an attack by enemy helicopters). It is characteristic that, fearing the latest means of destruction, the enemy uses helicopter links of 5–6 helicopters at low (50–100 metres) firing traps, similarly, planes attack it from a height of 100–200 metres and then move to the side or up in the sky.

**26.02**

The battle continues.

Post No. 2, today, Kherson. Unlike last night, I slept a little today.

Unbelievable. At the moment, I am enjoying the cannonade from howitzers and tanks. I cannot say what exactly is happening in the area of Antonivsky Bridge, Chornobayivka, and Muzikyvka, but the very fact of the battle shows that the Armed Forces have not disappeared, we are fighting back. I think that the “Antonivsky bridge” will go down in the history of the Third World War as one of the manifestations of heroism and self-sacrifice of Ukrainians. I just don't understand why they don't blow it up? After all, endless columns of hordes from Crimea push through it, which is why there are constant battles for this crossing. I don't understand why in 2014 Silenkov managed to quickly put concrete blocks on the approaches and the bridge itself, which simplified the possibility of its defence, but now it doesn't. The remains of soldiers (of unknown affiliation from the parties) have been scattered on the bridge for several days. The local mayor, Kolykhaev, whom I cautiously suspected of separatism on the eve of the war, now seems to be trying to organize the city, if not to fight back, then at least to function against robberies) – at the moment he is making an attempt to organize the DND<sup>58</sup>. Ukrainian symbols are preserved on administrative buildings, the town hall is illuminated by Christmas garlands. The cannonade doesn't stop, I hope it's ours who give them (excuse me) a rough time.

## 26.02

Hold the line.

There is a cannonade very close, something is flying. We've gotten used to it these days and don't particularly hide anymore (unless we're protecting our little girls). The current situation in the city. In the centre, the national anthem of Ukraine, our flag, is playing over the loudspeaker. The problem with “cattle” (marauders) and incomprehensible young people on the street, running into smartphones. In 2014, on the left bank of the Dnieper, marauders ransacked my dacha while the neighbors were silent, while the

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<sup>58</sup> Ukrainian: which means Voluntary National Self-Defense.



police guarded the ass of the Rehiony (political party in Ukraine formed in late 1997 that then grew to be the biggest party of Ukraine between 2006 and 2014). The village head has not yet inquired about what is happening there now. The cannonade continues, something rustles and flies. There is a lack of stingers and javelins here, if they are here at all. The main thing is that “Europe is worried, very worried”. The USA is also scratching its heads, but we will fight back. I am glad that the Greens have woken up and that our personal friends abroad are ready to help. I got rid of Facebook, because bots and some stupid colleagues are nervous, who are itching to scratch when they meet a spade (they say it's all Poroshenko fault). I don't have time to thank the donors. I will do it. For interested colleagues from abroad, I provide the account coordinates in the file. We should worry about our wounded heroes.

**26.02**

About collaborators.

Next to the self-sacrifice of some, the overt or covert collaboration of others emerged. Our UAV destroyed a Horde column near the village of Nova Zburyivka. 4,300 beds were delivered to the Golaya Prystan hospital. For some reason, our police did not organize hospital security and did not set up an “honour guard” for these “heroes-liberators” – one of the separatists tipped someone off and they took these trophies to Crimea. Occupant armored personnel carriers regularly roam Kherson, delivering 300<sup>59</sup> to the regional hospital, our wounded are delivered to the hospital of Vodniks. We are humane, unlike the “Moscow Federation”, but why does the Vodnik hospital have problems with blood components and medicines (people donated blood), while everything is okay in the regional one?

**26.02**

Spring is beautiful.

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<sup>59</sup> Code used for wounded military personnel.

Today is really sunny spring weather in Kherson. My son-in-law and I couldn't stand it – we went to see what was happening in the city. About a third of people and transport than usual. There are police and road security services. Saw one taxi, and trolleybuses. For the benefit of the mayor's office, several dozen men responded to the mayor's call to unite in territorial defence. I hope they own at least some kind of weapon. Ukrainian flags were added in the centre of the city, so that the “liberators” understood where they were headed, but they say that they got lost. Industrial stores do not work, half of all grocery stores are closed. There are no dairy products, there is little meat. There is no bread. I bake my own, now I will bake for my son-in-law's friend. While I was waiting in the car for my son-in-law, a Russian fighter jet flew overhead (100 metres), the air defence system went off, and it dropped a bomb in the Skhidniy district. I keep in touch with friends in Odessa and Kherson. A blood centre was bombed in Odesa, apparently following the beacon of the agents of the Moscow Federation. In Mykolaiv, the airport in Kulbakin was attacked once again, fuel depots are on fire, our fighter jets managed to take off. We fight because we are worth it.

**28.02**

The situation is mobile.

Friends, I received a number of messages from colleagues from Poland and Germany about the transfer of significant amounts to my special Polish credit card, where I also collect funds for the treatment of our Heroes. Until the bank clears all transactions (obviously it will be at the end of the day) = then I will inform. Recently, there was an alarm in Kherson, a possible shelling by hail (we just sat down to have dinner as a family, we did not go to shelter anymore), and I wrote about the advance of this column near Oleshok. ALL!!! The column of “polite”, “little green men”, was met and gently embraced by our soldiers. The column will go to the “Moscow Federation”

packed in cellophane in the form of minced meat and barbecue. Let's unite, it's more fun to beat the enemy together.

## **28.02**

Because the evil “people of Moscow” will do evil to you.

During the day, the enemy received reinforcements from the Crimea. At the moment, the ring around Kherson is closed. Their mechanized column dared to enter the city for the purpose of cleaning. At night, obviously, you should expect combat operations. A request to the people of Kherson to stop running around the city so as not to run into enemy or friendly fire. Follow light masking and other safety rules. Special equipment from the Russian Federation is already being brought in, which from tomorrow on the controlled territory will try to jam radio signals and spread disinformation among the population that Ukraine lost the war. Hang in there because we're worth it.

## **28.02**

The situation under the occupation.

Today, the enemy surrounded Kherson and dared to enter the city with armoured columns. I gave them “Kherson to smoke”<sup>60</sup>. They crushed scrap metal near the Antonivsky bridge and on the district force strong. At the moment, several units of equipment are placed at some intersections of the city. Some of their units wander around the city because they cannot find their way around. They want to sacrifice, ask or torture with great caution, well, the “liberators” are already too afraid of us. That is why local authorities have not yet been put forward, and they have not ventured into the city centre. We are waiting for “guests”.

## **28.02**

The face of war.

Friends in the fields where there is no war yet. See the file I attached. Such are our nights in Kherson:

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<sup>60</sup> Give something to smoke, here means “confront someone and fight back”.



## March 1

Let's hold on.

Good morning. It is freezing-cold and a little bit dusty in Kherson. Instead of activities in the evening and in the middle of the night – silence... My family is psychologically and physically exhausted – they are resting. On the first day, when a “horde” “swarmed” around the city, we decided that we would not become refugees, but during the occupation I would look for options to leave the city and prepare opportunities for my family to move beyond the

“Russian world”. We were ready to lose all material possessions inherited from our wife's parents and earned by us, because the “values of the horde” are not for us. Are there many among those storming the checkpoints who really need to get into the EU, because “Mordor” has come upon them? I do not know.

I think that there is a part that is not directly threatened by anything, because their homes are outside the hostilities. At the end of the day, it's their choice. Although I do not rule out that at the Victory parade, they will stand in the first rows and shed a modest tear while taking a picture for TV channels... These are the thoughts I decided to share with you.

### **March 1**

Fight.

The situation in the morning. In the middle of the night, Bayraktar fought the enemy near the airport. Hordes scattered around the city. There is a shooting battle in the area of the village of Tekstilnykiv (Kherson microdistrict). It is cloudy, so the drone will not be used. Hailstones and cannons work very close by. I sent my grandson Yasya to the first floor, to the boiler room, to his mother and sister. The enemy is pulling up tanks and other armoured vehicles from the direction of Zelenivka and Mykolaiv highway. They decided to take advantage of the absence of Bayraktars. They are conducting a “cleaning” in the city centre, in the area of the central market (a 15-minute walk from us). What's going on in that central market? Until I find it. On the first night of the war, their fighter jets fired a missile strike right there. I'm on a post. I cook soup.

GLORY TO UKRAINE!

### **March 1**

“Tasty” filth.

The horde wants to eat, that is why it is obviously moving from the field to the city, because it disposed of its expired dry rations of

2015. They entered the Danone factory and are eating children's yogurts. In addition, they want to cover themselves with the civilian population or our army, which everywhere turns them into humus. On Shumenskyi, one of the drunken residents threw a firecracker at the feet of the "liberators". They twisted it. A request to the people of Kherson not to leave the shelter.

### **March 1**

Shelling of residential buildings in Kherson.

It snowed in Kherson. There is a battle going on all over the city. The enemy flees, leaving behind the dead carcasses of "Putlerians". A fierce battle with all types of weapons is going on in Bilozerka. From the district road, Putin's soldiers are shelling the Tavriyskyi residential area.

### **March 1**

Creeping occupation.

The current situation in Kherson. The fighting from the centre of the city moved to the Bread Factory district. The enemy is afraid of devices that burn armoured vehicles, so they use the following tactics. With the support of armoured vehicles and shelling from hailstones, the infantry entered the city. Crossroads and other important objects were taken under control to ensure the entry of armoured vehicles into the city. Two "enthusiasts" fired twice at the checkpoint. The occupiers warned that if it happened again, they would shoot 10 hostages. That's all in short.

### **March 1**

Occupiers in Kherson.

I'm writing on a broken laptop with the lights off. From time to time, somewhere in the distance, explosions and shooting are heard. The fighting in the centre and around us stopped. The Horde uses the tactics of introducing infantry into the city under the cover of armoured vehicles, and before that they shell residential quarters. It is obvious that people were afraid to show themselves and did not

coordinate the fire of the defenders. The horde is robbing stores, struggling to be fed and allowed to bathe. Mayor Kolykhayev remained at his workplace, there is information that the city hall is on fire. Is this already an occupation? Let's see. Everyone here hates them fiercely.

### **March 2**

The city in the plan.

Folks! I was busy with family affairs. Kherson has been occupied since yesterday. Their troops come to us with the information that bread has been brought into the city and will be distributed free of charge. Their landing force was repulsed in Mykolaiv, obviously, they want to use people as human shields. It is obvious that the “swarm” of helicopters and two transporters that flew over Skadovsk and there was a landing on Mykolaiv. We have the bombed-out village of Antonivka near the bridge over the river and the village of Chornobayivka near the airport. Townspeople with cocktails tried to meet them on the street. Oil workers in a birch grove near the “Epicentere”. Unfortunately, they were all shot with cannons. Cocktails can be effective only in narrow streets, and not in open areas. Yesterday they looted food stores, and today they have already taken on stores with equipment. As I said, Tavriysky microdistrict was shelled yesterday with hailstones – they hit school no. 24, nine-story buildings and people who went out to buy groceries were torn to pieces.

### **March 3**

The city mourns the dead.

Brothers!

Today, I took care of my youngest granddaughter during the day. I gave my daughter Olesya the opportunity to rest a little, meanwhile, my son-in-law Denys was engaged in strengthening our house and organizing humanitarian aid to Ukraine from his company. I wrote that the women took our flags from the invaders

and stood with these flags in front of the regional administration and waved them in front of the occupiers' faces (there were also 4 BMPs there). All over the city there are dead people (passers-by, residents of buildings, people in cars) – there are dozens of civilians. 8 of our patriots died in the park on Naftovykyv Street (I wrote about them earlier – the bodies are buried there). The occupiers destroyed our pride “Factory”, the remaining goods were looted by looters.

The occupiers did not take down our flag at the place where there was a monument to Lenin – now it is for the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred (their tactics are as follows: where there are online cameras in the city, they behave decently, and where there are none – they commit acts of violence). In the city, Mayor Kolykhaev did not leave the townspeople, he works, as well as one more deputy of the city council, the rest are at home. Thank you to everyone who called or wrote words of support. Hang in there because we are worth VICTORY over “Mordor”.

### **March 3**

*dum spiro spero.*

And so, another day of occupation. As the mayor warned, expect shelling from 2 to 4 AM. Indeed, at 2.30 we were woken up by explosions in the Chornobayivka area. Apparently, Bayraktar fired at the enemy's equipment. Chornobayivka is a suburban village on the outskirts of Kherson, near the airport. Our international airport was closed for reconstruction from September of last year until January. There they expanded the departure hall for passengers, built a new runway (made it longer and wider). In addition to charter flights, planes flew to us from Kyiv, Istanbul, Krakow, Vienna, Katowice. Flights to other countries and cities were also planned. The village of Chornobayivka was the estate of a millionaire's collective farm in Soviet times, and its leader was a Hero of Socialist Labour. On the way from the airport to Kherson, L. Brezhnev and other Communist Party leaders liked to be taken on



a tour of the local poultry farm. At the moment, those who don't care are fighting to prevent tens of millions of chickens from starving there, because in this case the city will become an ecological disaster zone, we will suffocate here from their corpse smell. The village of Chornobayivka itself stands in ruins. As a reserve officer of the Soviet army (command staff) (by the way, I was not offered to take the oath to Ukraine, moreover, only now I discovered a record dated 1989 by the Military Commissariat, about my transfer to the reserve), and as an officer I understand that the situation with the automobile and the railway bridge across the Dnipro is no accident.

In Kherson, there is a curfew at night, and it is not advisable to drive by private transport during the day. The work of trolleybuses is being resumed. ATB stores that have resumed work are indicated. I know that there are long queues and a modest selection of products. We also have bread bought in *Silpo*, which was located at the burnt Factory. In addition, they “excavated” 2 kg. flour, so I continue to bake bread. The people of Kherson do not throw themselves at the necks of the “liberators”. The City Hall agreed with them on “neutrality” – people do not provoke them, they do not commit crimes in the city. There is information that the SBU building was bombed. Last night, enemy equipment was destroyed in Tomyna Balka (on the right bank near Berislav), a similar situation took place tonight near Tokarivka, 20 km away to the north of Kherson. I don't know for sure who, information about roadblocks etc. was posted on the network. Ordinary mobile communication and obviously not only – the FSB monitors here...

### **March 3**

Current life.

The Ukrainian flag at the Kherson city hall. Chornobayiv poultry farm distributes live chickens to people. Russians in the city destroyed a number of chain stores. Those who work have a limited choice and crazy queues. Orcs are digging in and mining the surroundings.

## **March 4**

Behind the mirror.

Just got back from downtown. It was necessary to buy food for a cat and a kitty. The line is long, because you cannot explain to the animal that there will be no war and no food. Then I helped our volunteers from the Red Cross carry bags of flour. They bake bread for Yaroslav the Wise and distribute it to people. They also give out 1.5 kg. torment I received my portion of flour for working for the family, and they also found out that I have small granddaughters, so they gave me a litre of milk and yogurt. Meanwhile, the son-in-law was looking for a working pharmacy. Most are closed or destroyed. The range of active ones is modest. Found a 0.5 kg can of baby food, right on the square blocked by the military. My daughter has nervous breakdowns from time to time, she is accepted by the children, especially now 2-month-old Tamara needs care. Yasya survived the first two days of bombings with a temperature over 40. I am holding Tamara in my arms and writing to you. Therefore, I apologize for possible mistakes, because the computer is buggy, keyboard does not punch out all the letters.

Our mobile phone is disabled, except for life (: mobile carrier. Only Russian channels and radio. The flags are still Ukrainian. ATMs are already unlocked. In the centre are their Kamaz. They want to make a picture for television of how they distribute humanitarian aid to pensioners. Including those brought from Crimea. They will probably give thanks on behalf of the residents for a peaceful sky and Russian peace. Thank you to everyone who is ready to share bread and shelter with my family. Even leaving the city is not realistic. Here are the graves of my wife's parents, grandfathers and great-grandfathers. I want to clarify the information that in the lilac grove near the epicentre, not 8 but 14 men from the Territorial Defense Forces died.

## **March 4**

Aeneas is a motor boy.

Friends, we are in trouble!

I was waiting for my son-in-law near the broken and barricaded doors of the Central Medical Centre under the flower stall today at noon. The son-in-law received information that in the pharmacy in the central square of the city you can buy milk formula for a breast-fed child. Along the way, I met several acquaintances. I haven't watched TV for two and a half years. An acquaintance reported the disconnection of Kyivstar and MTS and ATMs and added the fact that radio and television in Kherson are already Russian. Meanwhile, some movement began in the square, which was filled with cocoa-colored kamazs. The distribution of "humanitarian" aid has begun. And here it turned out that the residents, exhausted by sitting in the basements, standing in long lines in the surviving stores in order to buy at least something, did not understand the "broad" gesture of the invaders and the trouble – a picture for Russian television could be made by looters, they love freebies, but conscious citizens tied them to trees with scotch tape with their pants down and the inscription on their ass – "THIEF"! This is our problem, but we will overcome it as well as other problems.

### **March 5**

Kherson is struggling.

The enemy is trying to force the people of Kherson to love him by not allowing transport with medicines and food to the city. The residents of the city categorically refused to take the so-called "humanitarian aid" from the hands of the enemy. The businessmen of the city of Kherson are Ukraine, the townspeople chanted. Half an hour later, a rally is being held under the muzzles of machine guns. On the approach to the central square and directly on it, people are chanting "Glory to Ukraine", "Kherson is Ukraine", "Occupants –get out of the city". On the approaches to the square, the occupiers are trying to disperse people heading in its direction. The occupiers shoot, and the people leave.

## **March 5**

The occupant climbs under the plinth.

Obviously, many of you will say that I acted recklessly, that I did not take my family out in the first days of the war when I had the opportunity. I don't have an answer for that. I know one thing, that this is my land, not this “ragged horde’s land”. I am proud of the people of Kherson who do not obey (defended our voice in 2004, did not let the horde in 2014, do not obey now). Could I have done otherwise? Of course, I am very worried about my dearest ones. The townspeople organized themselves and supported each other. Since shops are almost non-functional, and it is not always safe to walk around the city, if you want, groceries will be delivered to you in exchange for cash. For those who do not have the opportunity to buy something, businesspeople distribute bread and flour for free. The poultry farm is trying to distribute live chickens and eggs (however, the occupiers have begun to obstruct this by setting up roadblocks and mining fields around the city). Now there is a tough battle in Mykolaiv. I am constantly in touch with my colleagues. “Orcs” rush to Odessa.

## **March 6**

A little bit of positive.

Today is another day of war and occupation of Kherson. I counted 5 KaMAZ autozaks on both sides of the regional state administration, in which the “orcs” dug in. In addition, a police armoured personnel carrier, an armoured vehicle and a riot police bus were also ambushed. The people of Kherson were not afraid and held another protest. In Zhytloselyshche (one of the districts of Kherson), a billboard on which residents explained their attitude towards the occupier attracts attention. Protests by Ukrainians took place in Kalanchak, Nova Kakhovka, and Henichesk. Occupants shot (injured) a man and a woman in a car in a field between Bilozerka and Kherson. Yesterday I wrote how, due to my character, I almost

ran into their bullet near the regional state administration. I forget that under the conditions of occupation, you don't pay a fine for mischief, but you can get a bullet. Today, by chance, I found a "gift" from a peaceful life in my fridge. At the beginning of January, I froze the dough for the cake. Baked it with tea rose jam and nuts. It's like a big bank holiday. Greetings to all.

**March 7**

"Love for the motherland where there are our heroes, there the power of the enemy cannot stand"<sup>61</sup>.

**March 9**

Kherson residents "greeted" the Russians with flowers.

On March 8, residents of Kherson did congratulate the "liberators" with flowers: two carnations tied with a black ribbon were handed to them.

*Underground Kindrat*<sup>62</sup>.

**March 10**

Stand.

Friends!

I believe that the annexation of Crimea is an ongoing Third World war, when the international legal system was neglected and, in addition to Ukraine, there was the military intervention of the "Moscow Federation" in Syria (destruction of Aleppo with vacuum, cluster bombs and chemical weapons), military actions of their thugs in Libya and some African countries. But that's not what I'm talking about. Those historians who survive will write about this later. About our situation. Those who carefully read my analysis until February 24 paid attention to that while speaking about Kyiv, I identified three key directions of attack on the capital: Zhytomyr, Chernobyl (it was it, as strange as it may seem to some) and Chernihiv. Chernobyl (a big "dirty" atomic bomb in the hands of the

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<sup>61</sup> Ukrainian; Любoв к oтчизні де героїть, там сила вража не устоїть.

<sup>62</sup> Ukrainian: Підпільний Кіндрат. Reference to Andrii Mikolaichyk's song.

“Kadyrivs” – why them, because at one time Putin ensured that the Chechens were recognized as terrorists at the UN level). Putin and his propagandists and generals underestimated, first of all, the moral and strong-willed qualities of our people (not all of them are like the son and grandson of Sofia Rotaru). Therefore, there are no flowers for the “liberators” in the south (except for 2 carnations with a black ribbon). The landing force of the Moscow Navy is hanging on the waves of the sea, since they did not take Kherson from the start, but now they invaded Mykolaiv, and therefore it is difficult to use two armies from Transnistria in the rear of Odesa. The Ukrainian Armed Forces is pounding “undefeated” until the forest hums.

Accordingly, the enemy resorts to acts of intimidation of our “allies” and attempts to demoralize the Armed Forces and the civilian population. Conventionally prohibited vacuum and cluster bombs are used. From the first days of the war, Putin made it clear that he would not stop at the possibility of using nuclear weapons (at least tactical). The world is dealing with a modern hybrid of “Nazism” and “fascism” in a form of “Russian peace” based on nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons. This circumstance forces the “allies” to be careful (stay outside the war zone), not to introduce a no-fly zone, and also to refuse to transfer Soviet aircraft to us (moreover, consultations are being held on how to “appease” Putin at the expense of Ukraine – to recognize Crimea as his, the supply of water and if not pushing Luhansk and Donetsk to us, then its recognition; refusal to contribute...).

We must understand that there is not only Blinken in the Biden administration, whose idea about the transfer of aircraft was defeated. Let's not forget the one captured by the enemy \*Kadyrivets? Zaporizhzhya NPP. That is, the enemy, in addition to the “dirty” Chernobyl bomb, has a real, much more powerful one, which shocked the EU, and far from sin, they will be happy to anger us on Putin's terms (therefore, I believe that Hungary or Italy will block the

issue of our immediate entry and it is no longer about joining NATO).

We are entering a more violent phase of the war, when the enemy will follow the pattern of Aleppo. It is terrible to destroy entire neighborhoods and cities (like their ancestors, the Golden Horde). And here vacuum or cluster bombs and hurricanes cannot be dispensed with. They will also hit cities that are outside the hostilities. Hit the water pipes (chlorine is stored there and in case of destruction of the containers – the death of all living creatures is guaranteed depending on the direction of the wind – protection to a certain extent can be gas masks, swimming goggles, masks with a valve on top of which an ordinary wet medical mask is worn, windows covered with wet sheets and door). The enemy is cynical, ruthless and will do anything to spread panic. Should we be afraid of the “Horde”? No! We are all mortal. By writing and spreading information from the occupied city to everyone, I risk myself and not only myself. More than 400 of my compatriots from the number of civilians have already been taken hostage. The Kherson pre-trial detention center was released from inmates, it is clear for what purpose. Look carefully on YouTube at what are the means of personal protection against the listed dangers. It is necessary to understand that, even if to a lesser extent, there is a danger of similar actions of the ideologues of the “Russian world” with regard to the Poles and the Baltic countries.

Fight – win.

**March 11**

Knowledge is power.

As I predicted yesterday, the enemy, losing on the battlefield, will begin actively bombing cities outside the limits of hostilities. Tonight, is a confirmation of that. They have not yet resorted to chemical and bacteriological weapons, but the fact that the “Rashists”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Supporters of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

initiated this issue at the UN (as if we have such weapons), these crimes are not far off. If the first week of the war was accompanied by permanent shooting and destruction in the city, the search for medicines, food, shelter, then in the second – regular explosions are pleasing – the Armed Forces of Ukraine did not forget about us. Today, the last two explosions were between 5 and 6 in the morning.

The city authorities are gradually improving life in the city (repairs of destroyed electricity, gas and water networks are underway; residents are being helped to re-glass windows, interruptions in the supply of bread have stopped – before the hostilities, most of the bread was supplied from Mykolaiv). The housing market is expensive, but everything is available. To the question “How much is the beetroots?” Azerbaijanis answer “60 for “svekla” and 30 for “buriaki””<sup>64</sup>. Before military operations, I was bothered by a question to which I did not have an answer. I often heard “cotton wool” conversations between the rows of traders, and local lumpen were circulating around the market. I asked myself the question, is it worth risking health and life for the sake of including this lumpen? Who is used to shitting in the Oleshkiv forest (I’m not even talking about poop), voting for a pack of buckwheat, or as the zombie bomber would say.

Recent events have put everything in its place. So, the local lumpen together with the “liberators” rushed to rob shops and everything that was “badly placed”. Yesterday, one of the looters from Zhytloselysh was taken to the hospital with a “frozen ass”. Some of the merchants not only live by the maxim “To whom war is, and to whom mother is kind”<sup>65</sup>. However, the people of Kherson, who are the majority, were amused. He wrote that he witnessed how on Freedom Square, free citizens showed their own dignity and did

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<sup>64</sup> Here, game of words: svekla – beetroots in Russian, and buriaki – beetroots in Ukrainian.

<sup>65</sup> Russian: Кому война, а кому мать родна.



not take handouts from the enemy, and there were 6 or 7 KaMAZ vehicles. They all went with N. Poklonskaya's sales force to the temporarily annexed Crimea. Kind people shared baby food, chicken eggs, flour, and fish from the Dnipro River with my family. The whole world saw the protests of the people of Kherson. The enemy, in order to oppress us, introduced the "Russian Guard" and prepared a pre-trial detention centre. They are afraid to remove our state flags from administrative buildings. I will report on expenses from the card that everyone knows about after our victory. I didn't spend the money on myself, money should work...

**Letter dated March 13**

From the running wave. Freedom Square in Kherson is full of residents with Ukrainian flags. Kherson is Ukraine. In the meantime, the incomplete rig regional Vova Saldo, together with another incomplete Stremousov near the eternal fire with a handful of pensioners are saving for the "Russian world".

**Letter dated March 13**

So that their blood suddenly overflows. Today is a sunny day in Kherson. I was thinking of sharing with you my thoughts about the general plan, but the day seemed so full of events that it was not appropriate. The poultry farm between Heson and Chornobayivka had 3 million chickens before the war. The "orcs" blocked the supply of feed there and the chickens began to die "en masse"<sup>66</sup>. During the bombings, the electricity supply there was damaged. Therefore, the workshop for preparing carcasses for sale does not work. More than 100,000 chickens have already died. They were able to distribute a part to the population, but more than 2 million remained. They will die, at best it will be possible to save 100=200 thousand in order to provide the population with eggs and meat. Today, the "orcs", consisting of a dozen local foot soldiers and brought mourners from the Crimea, and three collaborators played a movie on the slopes of

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<sup>66</sup> On a huge scale.

the Dnipro, how the people of Kherson “love” the “Moscow Federation”. At the time, a rally of 30,000 of our patriots gathered in the city centre. “Orcs” shot in the air and underfoot. In Novovorontsovs, “orcs” on tanks drove into private estates, slaughtering chickens and pigs, eating and drinking Moonshine.

**Letter dated March 14**

A bit of international life.

I remember when I was studying at the KSU university's faculty of history<sup>67</sup>, we did not mention about the so-called “unknown war” at all. The Finns, having lost part of their own terrain, drew conclusions. For many decades, the Finns, building their own homes, have been setting up a reliable bomb shelter in the basement. Neutral Finland, meanwhile, was quite dependent on trade with the “Moscow Federation”, and also implemented joint projects. In particular, according to the Russian project, preparations for the construction of a nuclear power plant have begun. At the moment, the Finns have stopped its construction. At the same time, there is a shortage of reinforced concrete structures in Finland, because rolled steel (and etc.) was exported from Russia and Belarus. Some of these industries are threatened with suspension. The Finns agreed on deliveries from India, but the first arrivals will not be earlier than in 2–3 months.

**Letter dated March 15**

Food programme on the march.

Apparently, residents of non-occupied territories are wondering what prices and what can be bought in Kherson? In the first days of the occupation, part of the grocery (and non-food) stores were looted by the occupiers and looters friendly to them (these are, for example, ATB chains, Europort and a number of others). It makes no sense to fight the looting of the occupier bare-handed, and the looters (those

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<sup>67</sup> Ukrainian: “на істфаці ХДУ”, which means Kherson State University (Херсонський державний університет).

who were caught) were tied to trees with their pants down with tape with the inscription on the scrim – “THIEF” (I'm trying to write without smudges, my LENOVO is falling apart, the keys are flying off, I'm typing almost blind). The most difficult week in terms of groceries was the first occupation week. The enemy blocked the supply of food for the city and the supply of fodder to the poultry farm (which doomed the death of 3 million chickens). The “orcs” expected that we would rush “en masse” to take their nasty food, I wrote about this previously.

### **What is the current situation?**

It was impossible to buy bread for 10 days in a row (I baked it myself and even shared it). Markets have started working (more adequate prices in Dnipro, in Zhytloselysh, Azerbaijanis sell 30–50 % more). The central market will start working today. Bread can now be bought relatively easily and at “normal” wartime prices. In ATB (out of a dozen and a half, 4 are working) on the shelves are candy in boxes, sweet water, some haberdashery and bread and leftover ice cream (that's all). In private stores, mayo and tomato sauce were added to this assortment. You can buy potatoes at the market from 15 (if you're lucky) to 30 hryvnias. Carrots, beets, cabbage from 30 to 40 hryvnias. Meat from 200 to infinity. Fish from the Dnipro from 50 and above. Salt is gone, sugar is gone too, oil can still be found. There is almost no sauerkraut – depend on your luck, you can buy it starting from 100 hryvnias. Apples can be found from 30 hryvnias. the biggest problem is that all this can only be bought with cash. ATMs are empty. It is interesting that yesterday in “Sitya Khata” all the hard cheese was scraped out, except for “kolach”<sup>68</sup> which is called “Russian”. There are a couple of points in the city that sell bottled milk – yet, the queues are crazy.

### **Letter dated March 15**

Aggravation.

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<sup>68</sup> Huge piece of cheese.

After three relatively calm days, today it will be hot, as I thought. The “bird” flew in and not only it. “Orks” lost some 29 helicopters in Chornobayivka, as well as cars with shells and manpower. They ran away from Mykolaiv, I don't remember anything that they scratched like that. They scattered around Kherson and Kamishany, and also scratched in Oleshki. It rattles like at the beginning of the war, the windows shake. In Zhytloselysh, people are hiding in basements and everything that looks like storage rooms. Shaking is not “childish”. Provocations are possible on their part, as everyone hates them and says it to their face. By the way, when they first came, they covered the entire district road with their scrap metal. During these two weeks, all this “good” was taken somewhere.

**Letter dated March 17**

**Weekdays**

Today is the 22nd day of the war and the 3rd week of the occupation of the city is coming to an end. The day before yesterday, everyone watched how under the thunder of cannonades, the “orcs” fled all the way to Oleshok, and at an incredible speed. The view is still the same. Then their superiors drove them in the opposite direction. In the city, they left the premises of the regional state administration (near which, due to my inattention, they almost shot me), moved to the premises and yard of the maritime academy. They also settled in the premises of the statistical office. Among the new products from them today, roadblocks were set up to cut off some residents of different conglomerations of the city (for example, Shumenskyi from Zhytloselyshche). It was smokey. Someone set fire to reeds in the floodplain of the Viryovchyna River. After all, this is the annual fun of the city's residents – smoking floats in the spring.

There was no doubt about our victory. Our troops are already 20 km away from the city. Although I understand that we will be under occupation for a long time. Today, the day passed relatively calmly, without explosions. Maybe a “bird” will fly in at night and

“poop”<sup>69</sup> a third time at the airport? There is no heating in Zhytloselysh, somewhere the communications from the boiler house in Shumenskyi were interrupted.

The first week of the war was the most stressful for my family, and I even began to think that I had made a mistake by not turning them into refugees, although I understood what was going on and there was such an opportunity in the process. There is no correct answer to this question. I did not take into account the fact that, unlike me, they are not used to shooting ranges and explosions. But they have already adapted. And yesterday they even moved from the boiler room to a different, “warm” room. I haven't watched TV for almost 3 years. In order to occupy “Yasya” with something else, the son-in-law installed an LED in the kitchen. The day before yesterday, we chased the “orcs” and the explosions caused power surges, the TV “fell asleep”. Today I had to gut the TV, which was already in a peaceful life in the workshop, but because of that we didn't turn it on. The autopsy showed that the technician, son of a b\*\*\*\*, took 1,500 hryvnias for the repair; and he slapped a couple of LED-points (if he had changed all the LED-tapes, moreover, to branded ones, I would still understand such a price). After all, in the conditions of occupation, obviously I will not find what is necessary for repairs. Therefore, I had to do something more prosaic. I molded dumplings with potatoes, tasted them and prepared dumplings with plums and dumplings with currants for tomorrow. Something started to rattle. Perhaps a “bird”<sup>70</sup>? As you can see, there are also “gray weekdays” under the occupation too.

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<sup>69</sup> Meaning, aircraft will drop a bomb.

<sup>70</sup> Aircraft.

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**Pavlo Kretov**  
*Philosopher, Cherkasy*  
**Olena Kretova**  
*Philologist, Cherkasy*

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## About people and war

On the night of February 24, 2022 (as usual, when the next day's lectures are not very early), I read in silence and darkness. The screen of the tablet was glowing, the windows of the student dormitories of the university campus had almost gone out, because it was already four o'clock in the morning. Text constructions from the Ukrainian translation of S. Pinker's new book "Enlightenment Today. Arguments in favor of reason, science and progress" ("Enlightenment Now. The Case for Reason Science, Humanism and Progress" 2018, Ukrainian translation 2019) I already began to flicker my eyes, due to fatigue, and finally I decided to try to get some sleep. But before that, in order to distract himself from the scientific style, he unfolded the recently purchased poetry collection of Yu. Izdryk (Y. Izdryk. Lazy and gentle, K. A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA 2021). And I read: "Closing this world is like an unread book/where the author clumsily holds the plot and motive/where mountains of heroes are sold at a discount/where the grief of heroes is elevated to an imperative/.."

And in the morning he found out that the old world is gone. That the page is turned and the book is closed. That the rationality of the world was undermined, and the scientist's balanced thoughts began to seem like the evil irony of the Christian father of lies, Satan, or the mocking skin of the Scandinavian Loki. And that no

respectable considerations and sociological explanations about the inevitability of progress, expediency and the light of reason prevented the WAR from starting. The attack and invasion of a country with an arsenal of nuclear weapons against a peace-loving neighbour much smaller in terms of territory and resources, which only wanted to be left alone and let it be itself. That morning, for the first time in this century, we heard sirens, the roar of bombers high in the sky, and saw the first videos of stealthy low-flying cruise missiles.

..and it's not like we weren't warned and we weren't waiting at all. But they didn't WAIT. They did not believe completely. They did not expect such a break in the old forms of life. The absurdity and inappropriateness, the flagrant illogicality of the war broke the graceful and fragile concepts of sustainable development and the primacy of the West's liberal values over the cave law of violence, the way a tank crushes a civilian car. And we watched plenty of such videos in the following days – the occupiers cheerfully posted them on their social networks and shared them in messengers. And therefore, as with for everyone, the first was extreme shock. As? How is this possible? Even as a student, I admired the sharp witty opinion of the wise Stanislaw Lem (from “Cyberiad”) that space is deeply civil in nature. And then for years, trying to justify this rather ambivalent thesis of the futurist Lem to his own students, he insisted that the irrationality of cultural forms in the Hegelian sense is removed (*Aufhebung*) by the rationality and pragmatism of civilizational frames. And when the first shock had passed – it became clear that there will be no quasi-scientific stages of grief – only composure, rather cold critical rationality. And rage. Huge rage.

Confused questions “why?”, “for what?”, tears and blind despair did not play a role, because they were quickly replaced by evil enthusiasm (without any network hysteria) and readiness to fight. Because, as it turned out very quickly, a modern political nation

in Ukraine was not just born, but strengthened. And this found direct, almost banal empirical, without any pathos and metaphysical twists, confirmation – examples of simple, everyday heroism and subdued greatness were visible everywhere. These are our former and current students, master's students and bachelor's degree holders who went to the Armed Forces as volunteers, volunteers from various social groups, teaching colleagues, people who were ready to give and gave literally the last so that “our guys” at the front were comfortable in destroying the enemy, business, medium and especially small, which not only supported and helped, but actually worked for the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.

Somewhat stiff postmodern skepticism and twisted irony about the “crowd” and “masses”, “electorate” and “population” once again demonstrated their own inadequacy, and the relevance of the optics of Aron's “Opium of Intellectuals” in a situation where the impressive relevance of intangible values and symbols of freedom rallied united people into a united nation, a single nation, and the academic meme of “divided society” was disavowed by the rise of the worldwide popularity of the “Russian warship fuck you” meme.

Ordinary Ukrainians have demonstrated to themselves and to the whole world that, as bearers of Western values, they are to a certain extent more European than some politicians of the old European democracies. Who were taken by surprise by the grandiose support of Ukraine's resistance by their own voters, and only now begin to show insight into the authoritarian monster – Russia, created by their own hands by the indecision and fear of the old Europe. The Stockholm syndrome of a certain part of the European political elite and the invariant guilt complex of old Europe (according to A. Assmann (Aleida Assmann), inscribed in the experience of temporality and the form of its experiential understanding – memories, actually the temporal regime) caused the phenomenon of perceptual blindness (Perceptual blindness), when Polishinel's secret,



although known to everyone, is taboo until verbalization, and to say out loud that the king is naked, only the conditional “young Europe”, the countries that are adjacent to the territory of the former Reagan “evil empire”, dare to say. To say out loud that “racism” (Russia+fascism) is identical to fascism as an ideology in defining features, because it is a version of racist theory, with Russian messianism, xenophobia, politicized quasi-religiosity, anti-Semitism, misogyny and so on. And we saw it. The evening came that day, we read the news in the shelter and understood that the world, as in the prologue to Jackson's adaptation of Tolkien's Oxford “Inkling” classic trilogy, had changed, changed forever. We felt it in the air of the shelters, the water passed from hand to hand, the food and medicine we shared.

Hiding from raids in the corridor of the apartment behind two walls (because the 84-year-old Matir cannot be taken to a shelter after a stroke), I remembered her stories about the war with the German fascists, when she, a 5-year old girl, behind a cart, walked from Slobozhanshchyna to Naddnipryanshchyna, when children like her hid from enemy planes under wagons, stories of fear and hatred. But also hope and faith. The wife wrapped her in a blanket, the cat looked at all this commotion with an unmoved cat's gaze. And modern racists attacked rockets and bombed our cities from the aircraft. The world collapsed into a few meters of illuminated space. Flashlight, phone, water, emergency backpack. And no sky with open doors. It's not the apocalypse yet. But it's time to throw stones.

In 1943, Pavlo Tychyna, a classic poet who in his youth could have been a Ukrainian Rilke based on the depth and level of philosophical tension of his poems, wrote glorious lines in the hospital to fight against the fascist invasion: “I am a people whom the power of Truth/ has not yet been conquered by anyone was./What trouble me, what a plague was mowing down! - and the strength blossomed again./To live – I do not ask anyone's right./To

live – I will break all the shackles./I assert myself, I assert myself,/ because I live”. But the war took place for the most part on the territory of Ukraine, and Ukraine lost the most victims, up to 9 million people, before that it lost another 4 million due to the Stalinist famine. And in March 2022, Oleksandr Irvanets, under rocket attacks in the town of Irpin near Kyiv, writes a poignant text: “From the city that was crushed by rockets,/I will shout to the whole world:/This year on Forgiveness Sunday/I don't seem to forgive everyone!/ Light, light, you abandoned us nicely!/But in the hell of this suffering-patience/Still stands the golden-top Kyiv,/Bucha, and Gostomel, and Irpin”.

Fascism denied Ukrainians and Jews, Russians and Belarusians the right to exist because of racial superiority, which was at the core of Nazism's ideology and the cause of imperial models such as “living space” (Lebensraum im Osten). Fascism denied the right to exist to Ukrainians and Jews, Russians and Belarusians for reasons of racial superiority, which were the core of the ideology of Nazism and the trigger of imperial patterns, such as “living space” (Lebensraum im Osten). Now racism, according to the loss-making logic of the empire, paints the Z symbol on its tanks, which is as easily affiliated with Nazi symbols as it indicates the direction of invasions and conquests – the West. This war is a war against the base West in general, against the project of the West as a whole, a war between the past and the future, freedom and coercion, development and stagnation. The ideology of the modern government of the Kremlin completely denies Ukraine the right to exist in any other way than as a colony. And so to the cave-like imperial mindset, this war is a war of annihilation. But not only of Ukraine, but also of the West, be it in any distant perspective.

Delusions about a bipolar geopolitical world, worldwide Eurasianism and Orthodox theocracy in a “symphony” with a repressive apparatus are firmly rooted in the collective consciousness

and imagination of the average consumer of media content of the Orwellian “ministry of truth”, which functions in every television receiver of the 140 million neighbouring country and reliably immerses the population of the quasi-empire in an alternate reality. Concussive hybrid wars and the actual concept of post-truth have also become a political and media reality in the world, not least thanks to Russian psychosocial experiments with planting and cultivating quasi-Soviet nostalgia, imperial resentment, mass xenophobia and hate speech. “One clip is one bomb”, as the protagonist of the iconic Hollywood drama “Wag the Dog” (1997) said – the totalitarian information show continues to this day.

Understanding this, it is incredibly difficult to accept that Wittgenstein's aphorism of silence in the age of information and communication technologies and concussive wars as a behavioural model is a luxury that people in the West cannot afford. One should not be silent about what cannot be said at the level of universal logical grammar. Our choices of ethical values and identity must be addressed, articulated and thereby ontologized. In the post-secular reality of the media space, we can even consider it as joining the Logos (λόγος), at the same time Heraclitus and Christ. And He, as you know, in our Western tradition is not only the LOGOS, but also the SOTER (σωτήρ), the saviour. Therefore, our university chapel, dedicated to the scribes Saints Cyril and Methodius, was not empty these days, but on the contrary. And the trees next to it are decorated with numerous ribbons in the colors of our flag – the sky and the field of ripe ears of corn. We say *urbi et orbi* – we are, and we are Ukrainians.

Discussing with the students the concepts of the banality of evil and the totalitarian ideology of H. Arendt, we often focused on the apparently inevitable division of the mundane and the high, the profane and the sacred, which the philosopher recorded. In the book

“Men in Dark Times” (1968, Ukrainian trans. 2013), she talks about the need for thinking to be rooted in life experience. Her experience was the experience of war, holocaust and wandering in a foreign land. Now, in order to refrain from the extremes of apocalyptic pessimism and hysterical optimism, we adopt her concept of “political dignity”, close to the knightly nobility of the Cossacks, the mythologized Ukrainian past. The goal is to simultaneously confront the darkness of our times and be a source of light for others. Because where there is silence, where the color gray reigns, according to Arendt, blacks always come to power. Opposing Russia's totalitarian propaganda means opposing the rebirth and destruction of human nature itself. Therefore, following Arendt and Jaspers, as well as the modern philosopher Iris Young (I. Young), we affirm the personal guilt of the perpetrators, but the collective responsibility of the Russian people for the evil caused to Ukraine and other peoples and countries – Moldova, Georgia, etc. For crimes against humanity. Liability due to lack of active resistance action. It is so easy, following Esau, to renounce one's birthright as a human being, so easy to accept the comfortable delusion of paternalism. But this is not about Ukrainians. Not about Ukraine.

One day in early March, when airstrikes had not yet become commonplace, while on duty for the day in the university's main building for the day, escorting people who had been spooked by an air raid nearby to a shelter, I noticed something. Gatherings of people, torn from their usual environment, were structured anew every time – circles and groups arose as a way to overcome fear and the unknown. People chatted, played, and the more time passed, the more they noticed each other as the Other, stopped being attached to their phones. People helped each other. This union was as simple as it was majestic. There was no violin playing in our warehouse, as in

one of the ones in Kharkiv, but on the edge of consciousness, a solemn chorus from the finale of Beethoven's 9th symphony – “Ode an die Freude” could be clearly heard. That basement was not like the halls of the European Parliament, where Beethoven's immortal theme sounds as the EU anthem. But the unity of all people, praised by Schiller, was there. And that's the main thing.

...after the alarm went off, while inspecting the storage room, I noticed children's chalk drawings on the ventilation pipes. Naive schematic images of a small bunny that defeated a huge bear. Still debating whether to consider this an allegory of the zeitgeist or just a child's drawing?

**I**t should probably be categorized. Today, March 20, is the 25th day of the war. Odessa, Ukraine.

*General state of affairs.* It was impossible to focus on anything other than the incoming situation in the early days. The first actions were: to contact relatives and acquaintances, to find out their condition, to help those who wanted to evacuate. Our daughter arrived in Odessa from Kyiv (she travelled for almost a day in a huge traffic jam), some of our friends left for Western Ukraine and abroad (the journey took several days for everyone). I had online classes at the University on Thursday, February 24th. Two lectures for different courses.

The students did not come to one class, to the other – in the second half of the day – a few came, I did it, but now I don't remember how. I left the house before classes started, withdrew some cash from an ATM, bought the necessary groceries for a few days. There were queues at ATMs everywhere, but I found one with very few people. I went to the University to the military registration department on the second day, on Friday, received my military ID, left contacts for communication. (I am 57 years old, I am a reserve lieutenant, I studied at the military department at the University as a commander of a motorized rifle platoon 35 years ago.) I could not do anything except household chores and activities, just follow the news. On the same day, I received a message that the University paid my salary and withdrew some more money. We found out (my family and I) the address and location of the bomb shelter, it is in a neighbouring house, but it is difficult to go into it, you need to walk almost a block, turn around the corner. Our house has 4 floors, built

in the early 20th century. Odessa is hardly shelled, but air raid alerts are announced two or three times a day.

We don't go to bomb shelters. Gunfire is heard almost every night. Saturday (third day) my wife and I went to the market to buy some long-life food. I also had to solve a number of household issues: buy spare batteries for a flashlight, a power bank, an adapter for a laptop. Each action was not easy: the stores were closed, it was necessary to find a seller on the site, agree on when he would be there, come to the store at a certain time, despite the fact that it was difficult to move around the city. On Saturday we also visited my mother (she lives in the suburbs) and father-in-law. We also fulfilled the orders of some departed acquaintances to provide their relatives with food. On Tuesday, Day 6, the University announced a decision to announce a vacation for students for two weeks, but offer consultations for students – according to the class schedule. Only individual students, 1–2 people, came in the first week of vacation (from February 28th to March 4th) for consultations (online); the second week more more – about a half. The dean wanted to hold daily staff meetings online, but most of the staff refused.

Some economic problems arose: the speed and scope of the Internet was sharply reduced (many sites did not open, for example, Zoom), we switched to another provider, since we had its connector inside the apartment. Each such action causes difficulties: employees of the provider organization do not go home, do not lay cables, you need to buy everything you need yourself (in our case, a router and several cables) and establish a connection. And there are many such tasks, they arise in about a day. But all this, of course, is trifles.

By the third week, the situation had generally returned to normal. Some shops are open, some are not. Products are delivered, although their composition has changed. The market is open, but a third to a half of the stalls are empty. Prices rose unevenly, it is difficult to say how exactly, on average – by about a quarter. Since last

week (from March 14th) online classes have started at the University, about 60–70 percent of students attend my classes. The rest have left, joined the territorial defence or are working as volunteers. The University paid the first half of the monthly money (usually the monthly salary is paid in two installments) ahead of schedule – March 10th. The University confirmed the provision of armour for the military personnel of the University, but, as far as I know, some still managed to get into military units or territorial defence.

*Psychological condition.* Of course, the outbreak of the war was a shock for everyone. I don't know anyone I've talked to who would have taken it differently, despite previous talk about preparing for it. In the early days, it was impossible to think of anything else (this imprint also lay on economic and domestic issues). Two main themes: the state of affairs at the front, the state of relatives and friends in other cities. Some Russian colleagues condemning the invasion of Russian troops have written letters of apology and expressions of their solidarity with me personally and with the citizens of Ukraine. I broke off all relations with other colleagues from Russia back in 2014. It became clear on the third day that the psyche could not withstand constant stress, so I had to gradually look for something that could allow me to distract myself from thoughts of the war for at least an hour. I managed to return to work only a week later, but still I can't devote as much time to this as before. Among my acquaintances there were none who support Russia in this war, otherwise I would have to break off all communication with them, as many acquaintances did.

I never tire of being amazed when I listen to reports about the opinions of Russians. On the other hand, Ukraine's support from the world community (most of it) makes a huge impression. I and everyone around me are very worried that it is so difficult and so slow to find solutions to specific issues (primarily about providing assistance in armaments).



I can say that I noticed a revision and change in many assessments and positions. The professional habit of looking at the issue from different angles compels me to look not only at the reviews of the state of affairs at the front from the Ukrainian side, but also from those who actively support the Russian aggression. But before watching each such review, I have to set myself up for several minutes, calm down. I do not watch ideological programmess at all, only analytical ones. I discovered an interesting difference: Ukrainian news prefers to record facts (of course, not all of them, many of them are very streamlined), while the Russian side prefers to present the planned successes as already achieved (for example, in the case of fixing the advance of Russian troops to a particular city, the authors further strive to present this movement that has already begun as having already achieved its goal, the city captured or surrounded). English-language news (for example, the BBC) focuses on the scope of the war and its horror, and focuses on showing that a full-fledged war is taking place – describing the victims, the destruction, the stories of individuals or families. Gradually, a circle of military, economic and political observers, experts emerged, whose analysis seems to be the most meaningful and profound. I continue to follow the news today; it takes up a significant part of the day.

It is very impressive how many strangers help each other.

There is a constant internal anxiety, which is muffled over time, but does not go away. I really want to be useful to my army and country, you feel helpless and unnecessary. Returning to scientific studies helps to overcome psychological confusion and fatigue, but still do things that you couldn't do before. I can't talk about military actions in the classroom, so as not to completely get away from the subject and not disrupt the lesson. Of course, I answer if questions are asked. But students rarely ask them, they are also confused. There is almost nothing left in the mind that was not affected by the

war. And this despite the fact that from the very beginning I had no doubts about the victory of Ukraine and the final defeat of Russia. I can imagine how hard it is for those who have more doubts and less optimism.

*Contacts.* I called and wrote to many acquaintances, including those in Kyiv, Kharkov, Lvov, at home, in Odessa. Some answered in monosyllables (thanks, okay, etc.). Everyone I spoke to condemns Russia, but they see the situation very differently. There is a huge range of positions available with the unity of a common view. The number of people who hate Russia has increased significantly. The people who consider her a victim have almost disappeared (there were much more of them before). Approximately half of the people blame Putin first of all, but the same number consider all Russian citizens to be guilty, regardless of their views. A graduate student came, who was not taken in the military registration and enlistment office, and he joined the territorial defence. He left an unfinished dissertation on Plato. They live in the barracks, but most of the uniforms have to be bought at their own expense. Another student wrote that he works as a volunteer, travels a lot between different cities, accompanies cargo. We discussed his topic for the term paper. Most of the people I have spoken to have no doubts, no hesitation, they are convinced that they are right.

## **The first days of the war**

**M**y story is not heroic at all. It is the usual story, the story of the usual person during the first days of the war.

It was the period of January and February when the social networks and television spoke about the war more often.

It was advised how to prepare the suitcase once the alarm was raised, how to conduct the evacuation, how to arrange assistance. So, together with our close people we discussed the place of our meeting, then prepared the documents and packed the satchels. Only my brain refused to understand the fact how it was possible to break into the foreign land in the XXI century and to tell how it is necessary to live and behave in the way wanted by somebody. And this is despite the fact that I understood rather well that the war had been waged in the east part, named Donbas for 8 years. Maybe, human nature has been arranged in such a way that we don't understand the problem to the end as it doesn't touch us very closely.

### **24 February 2022**

It was Thursday morning of the working day and it was the early getting up. It was always a little problematic to reach the right bank of the Dnieper river from the left one. So, my husband drove to work very early because of traffic jams. As for me, I had some time and I liked getting up leisurely in the morning. About 5 am while my husband was taking the shower, I was pampering myself under the warm quilt, watching the remnants of sleep. And suddenly I was tossed from bed by the sound of explosions.

“Sergiy, what’s that? We are being bombed”, – I cried. Near 5 am the loud explosions were heard in the city of Kyiv and Kyiv region. Then I remembered that during last weeks of February I had often heard the lines of the song in my head “Kyiv was bombed, we were announced the war had started”.

It was the war....

We met with our children in the agreed place. We talked, packed things into the car, discussed the route and embraced each other. We blessed them and sent them into the safe uncertainty but we ourselves stayed at home. Some invisible ropes kept me firmly with Kyiv, the city I love with all my heart, the city which received me and gave me strength, development and energy. And now I couldn’t leave it and my native cozy school. Moreover, to leave it without energy and life-giving forces.

While going to school by civil transport, there were no thoughts in my mind, it was somehow quiet and empty. Without blinking I watched the Dnieper river through the window of the underground train. As a result, I passed my stop and for 2 minutes couldn’t understand where I was and where I had to move farther.

I met my colleague on the way to school. She took her notebook to work online. I uttered: “What work? It’s more important to stay alive now”.

What I did first, was to give words of support to our pupils. After that I went to check the shelter, preparing for a different development of events. Then the next was to carry all mats for training from the gym into the shelter, to check the first aid kit, ventilation and the reserve exit. And certainly, just in case, we arranged some biscuits, chocolate bars and water.

Then we observed the classrooms, switched all equipment, hid school documents and blocked the floors and at last opened the attics.

I am sincerely grateful to our colleagues, all our friends and to everybody who was close during these days. It was very difficult for

me to reach our school during the 2 first weeks of war but my deputy teacher Olena Mykolaivna stayed there all the time, being very reliable and responsible.

Some custodians and other watchmen helped her in everything in order to support the life at school, the order in the shelter, to catch the saboteurs, to check the roof of the primary school because there was the suspicion to see labels on it and certainly to water the flowers. So, everything was done for the school to live despite the explosions, bombs and missile strikes.

During the first war night I was at home and following the instructions, I arranged my bed in the inner room behind 2 walls. Throughout the night there were explosions. Every time my body shrank and lessened and my heart died. Of course, I slept well-dressed under the warm blanket in the warm flat. But it seemed to be cold, I was frozen and started trembling.

To manage everything better, I started with breathing exercises and tapping my body. After that, I managed to calm down a little. But the shaking appeared again and again. Later I learnt that my body had responded to stress in this way.

It was the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> of February. It was a quite different morning without working plans, meetings with colleagues, children, without unhurried morning coffee and the usual rhythm of life. It was the quick shower while there were no explosions. Every morning I tried to find the kind positive words to support colleagues and to make a rollcall. All life had been divided before and after the 24 of February 2022. And after that gradually step by step collecting myself together, I developed new habits and learnt to live during the war.

When there were strong explosions, we sheltered ourselves on the parking lot some days. We dressed warmly in three layers. But it was as cold as in the North. The concrete pulled out the last warmth from us. But the worst was that nervous shaking from stress

appeared. Moreover, the breath caught the dust and emissions of the car fumes. When we were frozen to the bones and we didn't have enough strength, we kept warm and slept in the car.

When the sun rose and wrapped the ground, we returned home. Our heads were empty. On the subconscious level, I fulfilled my duties, that is to take the obligatory shower very quickly, if there wasn't an air alarm, then morning coffee and to tidy up the flat. I called it «Preparation for Victory». After that I dressed and started writing daily motivational words to colleagues, doing a lot of calls and writing SMS to the nearest and dearest, colleagues, children and certainly I listened to the latest news. This caused disordered movement and anger. There were no tears. I was as if somebody had frozen me. There was neither fear nor anxiety, no panic but there was quietness and disorder in my head.

Just at night Russian aggressors began bombing more often, at the same time it was getting more terrible. At night the ear became more aware and listened to the darkness. It was the dead and clear quietness. Suddenly the fridge buzzed, then the neighbour walked from above, something knocked and rumbled and at the same time my body shrank and froze.

Sometime on the 8th day we lost our alertness and stopped descending from the 18th floor into the parking lot. We stayed at home relying on the higher powers.

From the first days of the war I often heard the words of the prayer "Our Father" in my head. Once in my childhood my great grandfather Sergiy induced me to learn it. Later the hour of the prayer has become my daily ritual.

At night it is dark in the windows neither the light nor the glow. In the morning the streets are empty, neither cars nor people can be seen.

These are my memoirs about the first days of this unfair war.

## **Living with the air-raid sirens**

*At the time of this writing, the Ukrainian city of Odesa, where I live now, was (sort of) a nearby front-line city and was under the menace of a landing of the Russian marines.*

Residents of Odesa truly felt the war between Russia and Ukraine as early as the first day, when several Russian missiles exploded in the city. The understanding that Russia had attacked Ukraine and thereby started a war did not come with the explosions, which were just a big rumble somewhere in the city for most residents of Odesa but through social media. On February 24, 2022, I, for one, woke up in the early morning as usual (I was supposed to have a Philosophy of Marxism class with my students at 8 a.m.) and learned about the war from social media, primarily from Telegram. Only afterward I heard the rumbling sound (it was another explosion). A rocket flew near my house and exploded somewhere. It was a confirmation of what was said on social media.

It is important to note that the understanding that the war had begun came through social media, and the sounds of the explosions were a kind of confirmation of this; but the very awareness of the fact that the war had begun came a little later: when I tried to hold a class on Philosophy of Marxism with students in the form of an online lecture (when the war began, quarantine restrictions were in effect in Ukraine due to the COVID-19 epidemic). Only one student out of three attended the class. The rest were absent for a reason: one student had gone home urgently, where he later became a volunteer; another was at work because he was a journalist. I could tell by the

manner of the only student present that he was nervous, though he tried to hide it. I tried to act like nothing was wrong, but I can't tell you how it really looked from the outside. Throughout the class, there was a sense that normality and everyday life were falling apart, that the world was losing its usual meanings and was no longer what it had been before; that the attitude toward the world was changing and the absurdity of this attitude was being exposed, just like in Albert Camus' philosophy set forth in 'Le Mythe de Sisyphe'. Attempts to behave normally, as usual, in those circumstances, turned out to be false forms of protest (rebellion, revolt) against the absurdity of what was happening.

It was the impossibility of returning to normality that made me aware that war had come to Ukraine – and in this new reality I had to develop new ways of existence, new modes of being. The fundamental point of this new reality is the awareness that I am at war now. This awareness becomes a kind of background knowledge behind everything you do now, everything you think now, everything you dream now, everything you hope for now. This background knowledge defines, organizes, directs, and controls your life.

One important component of your new life becomes the air-raid sirens. They are built into your everyday world, and your reactions to the air-raid sirens constitute your new everyday experience. And from the outside, this new experience is of a certain cognitive interest.

In the following, I will try to describe my experience of 'dealing' with air-raid sirens and reflect on it.

First air-raid sirens in Odesa sounded on February 25, 2022, around 5 a.m. And I safely slept through it. It wasn't because I was a heavy sleeper, even during the war (although one can't rule that factor out). There are several factors at play here.

The first factor was the poor audibility of the air-raid sirens. The first days the air-raid sirens were very hard to hear, and the sound of sirens was coming from somewhere far away. Within the city, which



itself is full of various sounds (noises), the sounds of the sirens could be confused with other noises, such as traffic noise, trains noise, and gusts of wind between buildings. You had to distinguish the sounds coming into the apartment by listening carefully.

Also, because of the winter weather in Odesa, all the windows in the apartment were always tightly closed, which was not very conducive to the penetration of sound from the outside (especially if there were windows with soundproof glass). So, you had to keep some of the windows ajar. But even half-open windows do not always allow you to hear the sounds of sirens – you cannot imagine how much noise inside the house: ticking clock, running refrigerator, running water boiler, running computer, running TV, the noise of neighbours, the noise of central heating, noise of water pipes, light bulbs on, and so on. People live in a noisy space, and they are used to living in it; only such extreme circumstances as war allow them to pay attention to the noise around them.

Among other things, the poor audibility of air-raid sirens forces you to be constantly on edge and to listen to sounds from the outside from period to period, which does not reduce your anxiety and nervousness but increases them.

Despite numerous complaints from Odesa residents, the authorities were in no hurry to resolve the issue of the audibility of the air-raid sirens. It took a change of Governor of Odesa Oblast for the problem to be solved. Now all over Odesa the air-raid sirens can be heard very well, even with the windows closed. For example, in my neighborhood, the siren is being turned on in a building nearby. In addition, church bells began to be used as air-raid alarms. There are mobile apps that emit a powerful siren wailing in the event of an air alert. Local television channels are announcing the air-raid alert. Several social media outlets are alerting the air-raid. For example, two public Telegram groups specialize only in air alerts: the first covers Odesa and the Odesa region, while the second covers only Odesa. Telegram groups of the mayor and other politicians of Odesa

also alert about air-raid alarms. Sometimes such alerts get to the ridiculous point: air-raid alerts come in the form of stickers (I observed this in the Telegram feeds of the mayor of Odesa and the press secretary of the Odesa regional state administration).

The second factor is the following: before the war, you have no authentic knowledge of what air-raid sirens sound is. All my views on air-raid sirens were guided by the old Soviet World War II films images. And those views were incorrect: modern air-raid sirens do not sound similar to the ones in the movies, although they are somewhat similar: they are a continuous sound produced by the unwinding of large flywheels by an electric motor, and it builds up and goes down.

One way or another, the aforesaid factors were removed over time.

Air-raid sirens force you to develop some patterns of behaviour. For instance, when you hear air-raid sirens, depending on where the sound hits you and the duration of the sound (you may not immediately hear the sirens), you either go to hide in the nearest place chosen as a bomb shelter (storage rooms with catacombs, an underground parking lot, the basement in your house), or you go to the entrance hall or out to the stairwell (most importantly, you must be separated from the street by two walls: one should take the hit and the other should take the shrapnel), or you go to the bathroom. If the air-raid sirens catch you outside, you must either run to the nearest shelter (if you can see a shelter or know where the nearest shelter is) or look around and listen to where something is flying at you; if it is, you must fall to the ground, covering your head, and fall with your head in the direction the shells are flying from.

If you first get an air-raid alert via Telegram, you listen to what's sounding on the outside, just in case. Because, sometimes, false alerts come (those who send out air-raid warnings are also human, and they can make mistakes). The air-raid sirens and the warnings through social media, TV, and cell phones are not always

synchronized: a siren can sound first, and then, a few minutes later, an alert can come, and vice versa.

In general, in the state of martial law, you learn many helpful things about air-raid alarms. For example, the cessation of the air-raid siren does not mean that the danger is over. In the early days, many people didn't know this: they thought that if the signal stopped, danger had passed. The people who set off the air-raid sirens were partly to blame for that: instead of the prescribed one-minute sound signal, the sound signal could last more than 15 minutes. That may have misled many people. After the signal has stopped, one has to wait in the shelter for the notification for the end of the air-raid warning in general: the notification is done either by a short sound signal (this is a rare case) or by notification via social media, television, phone, or radio.

As things stand, the mind behaves interestingly: reacting day after day to the air-raid sirens, the mind tries to identify a pattern, to build a graph of the air-raid warnings. That, however, proves impossible. In the first days of the war, the air-raid sirens were turned on around 5 p.m. However, after a few days the time changed: now the sirens could be switched on around 2 p.m. During the day, the sirens were turned on differently each time: around 11 a.m., around 3 p.m., around 5 p.m., around 7 p.m., around 10 p.m. In general, it is impossible to predict when the sirens would sound. Nor is it possible to predict how long the air raid will last or how long you will have to spend in hiding. An air raid can last as long as five minutes or as long as five hours. Under these conditions, your mind just gives up.

This attempt to identify a pattern shows how one tries to adapt to new realities. However, the process turns out to be random: the enemy does not act according to a schedule, and even if he does, we are not supposed to know this schedule. That is why adaptation happens differently: when you receive a warning about an air-raid,

you perform a series of actions that have already been developed almost to the point of automatism (from the outside watcher, it may look like everyday practices or rituals).

My experience with air-raid sirens described above cannot be called a full-fledged study, also from the viewpoint of philosophy, because I did not use any scientific or philosophical methodology. The experience described earlier does not even amount to a participant observation study, which would allow placing the presented experience in such fields of knowledge as communication studies, cultural or social anthropology, ethnography, ethnology, social geography, sociology of culture, or social psychology, because my initial intention was not to collect some research material for subsequent analysis and generalization.

Nevertheless, my experience allows me to outline several topics for possible extensive research related to the human relationship to air-raid sirens.

The first research topic could be the study through the prism of Albert Camus's philosophy of absurdism, which I mentioned at the beginning of the text: here we could use Albert Camus's conceptual apparatus to explore the 'invasion' of war, including through air-raid sirens, into human life and the creation of a precondition in the form of absurdity for the subsequent re-creation of human existence.

The second research topic could be approached through practice theory (praxeology). Practice theory could be used to examine the everyday practices of people continually facing air-raid sirens, and, in particular, when air-raid sirens are becoming a part of everyday life, and the responses to them are becoming societal habits. Here it is possible to enter the history of everyday life to study that life as an everyday one in the war context.

The third research topic might be of interest to polemology (war studies). While air-raid sirens, like other air-raid warnings, are primarily for the protection of civilians (that is, they are part of the defence military infrastructure), the sirens and warnings themselves

can serve as enemy weapons, primarily as weapons of information and psychological warfare: sirens inform people about a possible strike and a possible strike can act as a 'trigger' for people, causing them fear, dread, anxiety, desperation, and other negative mental reactions. The triggering of air-raid sirens at 2 a.m. or 5 a.m., for instance, catches people off guard because they are usually asleep at that time. Prolonged air-raid alarms increase anxiety and fears, and prevent people from getting enough sleep, which only exacerbates negative mental reactions in people and can lead to nervous breakdowns, mental disorders, or inappropriate behaviour. Air-raid sirens have a particularly strong effect on people with a weak nervous system or on mentally unstable people. Also strongly affected are parents of children. The parents are more concerned about the survival of their children than about their own, and this concern also takes the form of anxiety and fear. This is why parents, even staying in relatively peaceful places, often choose to flee with their children from these places, especially beyond the borders of the country. The same applies to people on the verge of a nervous breakdown or mental disorder. In general, air-raid sirens, though they have a protective function, can be an instrument of enemy terror.

A psychological perspective on the effects of air-raid sirens on people opens the door to exploring the relation between air-raid sirens and limit situations, which encompass anxiety, fear, and the like, and which are examined by a varied range of psychoanalytic and philosophical (for example, existentialist) conceptions.

The fourth research topic is related to knowledge and non-knowledge. The air-raid sirens are, by and large, general alarms. Their function is to alert you that something deadly is coming in your direction. In other words: air-raid sirens give you some information, give you some knowledge. But air-raid sirens, like other forms of air-raid warnings, do not tell you specifically, what is coming, how much it is coming, where it is coming from, and where

it is coming to; the knowledge of these things may determine the specific behavior of people. So, for such an example, it is best to avoid the upper floors of a building when a missile is fired, and it is best to avoid the lower floors when a street shooting occurs; when a chemical weapon such as ammonia is used, it is advisable to take shelter in the lower floors and basements, and conversely, when a chemical weapon such as chlorine is used, it is advisable to take shelter in the upper floors. As a result, it turns out that air-raid sirens simultaneously inform and do not inform people: they warn of danger, but not of what kind. In addition, the absence of air-raid sirens is no guarantee that there is no danger, because if, for example, multiple rocket launchers, such as 'Grad', 'Uragan', or 'Smerch', shoot, then no one will have time to turn on these sirens. It follows that even the absence of air-raid sirens is no reason not to be anxious.

## **We must live**

**24.02.22.** It is 5 am. A sweet dream interrupted by a phone call. I look lazily at the screen, Olena Yevhenivna, probably by accident... Call again in 5 minutes... Seriously? It must be an extraordinary event to do so...

I pick up the phone, worried, frightened voice of the employee: what should we do, Valeriie Mykolaivno?

Olenochko, what happened? You should do what always do every morning! Do I not know something? Bombing! Can't you hear? BOMBING US!!! Planes, helicopters! There are many of them!!!

The dream seemed to be taken away by hand! Give me a minute! I hear my husband already talking to someone on the phone...

Then I receive a message from the top management! Instructions for the first time!

THAT'S ALL! HERE LIFE IS DIVIDED!!!!

What shall I do? I am urgently writing to all educators a message for parents that the kindergarten will not accept children until the situation is resolved... Everyone should stay at home!

I'm going to wake the children up. How to do it? How not to scare them? Explosion! The house swayed! FRIGHTFULLY! I kiss my son, I wake my daughter and I say that you are not going to school today. They ask – is it quarantine again? No, my children (pause, inhale, exhale) – the war has begun! I can't believe it, but it's true! Explosion again! The siren sounded! Anxiety is rising! I pray! Merciful God, save the children, they even didn't live a life...

However, here's what's strange, neither then nor now there were no tears as if I'm an extremely emotional person, and here is such a strange reaction, just gathered and holding on steadfastly!

Thus began a terrible, unbearable, incorrigible life for my HOMELAND, for our Ukraine.

Since then, as if time has stood still, there are no dates, days of the week, only counting the days from the beginning of the war....

Every morning you ask about your family and friends, work colleagues, help everyone you can help, someone with money, someone with food, someone with prayer, someone just with a kind word of consolation. Although you can barely restrain yourself!!!!

The most difficult thing for me was to prevent hatred in the middle, to pray, and ask God for patience and mercy! Hatred, like rust, destroys unnoticed... you can't pray and curse at the same time...

The first 10 days were probably the hardest... Don't you understand how this is possible? How to live? How to protect children? What to tell them and how to calm down?

Volunteer work is distracting: we prepare dinners for our soldiers, and we help everyone we can! In the evening you come back to all these thoughts about the present and you can't explain, you can't understand, you can't accept, you can't do anything... it's even worse!

I was lucky to live in Kyiv... But something terrible happened: Mariupol, Irpin, Bucha, Borodyanka.... Pain, unspeakable pain, and the inability to understand what is happening there. The mind does not accept, and how can this be accepted?

Time will pass. This terrible war will end, and everything will fall into place, BUT no one will remain the same.

And do you know what every Ukrainian is aware of now?

We have STRENGTH, we have FAITH, we have a THIRST for LIFE and this is our genetic, national feature!

We must live, for the living and the dead, for the children, for our beautiful, independent, our free! To live for the sake of UKRAINE, because it is WE!!!



It's started on 23 February 2022. We've been chatting with my friends from Ukraine via messenger. They moved from Kyiv to the Karpatian region quite recently, because it was a good place for snowboarding. Nobody knew that morning after we will wake up in a completely different reality, where people will move from Kyiv not because of snowboarding activities, but in search of safety. At 5:30 AM one of my friends wrote: "This is war, and it seems that it's time for us to stay and fight or move forward".

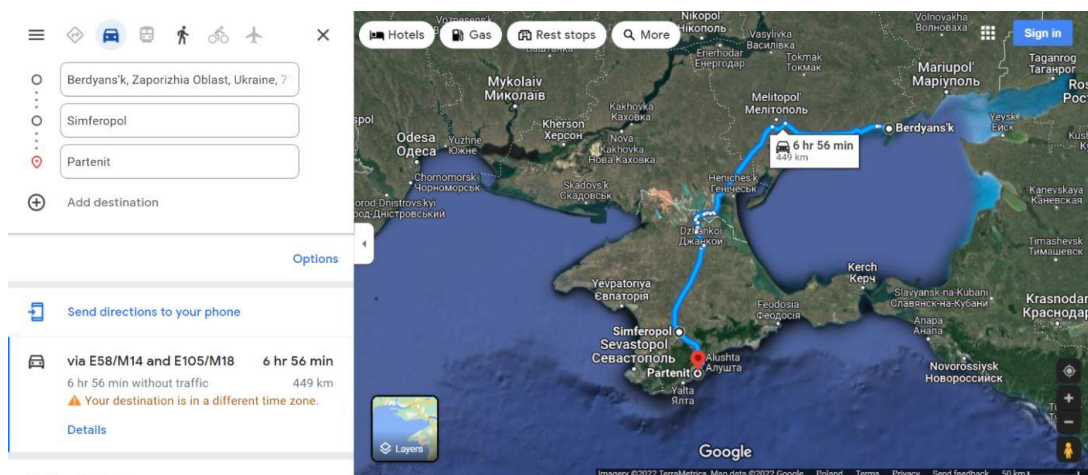
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My sister has lived in Mariupol since 2014. When the war in Donbas started, she made the decision and moved out from Donetsk with her husband. As of 24 February 2022, her family has been in Mariupol, and since that day we haven't heard from them up until 15–16 March. For 20 days their relatives have been trying to find out what is going on there, are they alive and how to help them evacuate. On the 20th day, a short but important message was sent to their friends: "We are alive. Yet, we can't leave the town. Send it to my mom".

On the same day, they decided to move from Mariupol to Berdiansk, because living conditions in the city were beyond terrible. When they were packing up all the necessary belongings, the rocket hit their house just one floor above: windows in their flat have been destroyed, grandma was shell-shocked by the shock wave of explosion. My sister and her child were in a state of emotional shock.

Their car has been completely destroyed by pieces of bricks and concrete falling from upstairs. The husband of my sister managed to find an abandoned Lada 2109 and fill the tank of a car with some leftovers of fuel they had. Her husband was not allowed to leave the

town, because he is a policeman and needs to stay in Mariupol, but they asked a relative to drive and head out to Berdiansk. On 16th of March, they reached Berdiansk city. On 18th of March, we had a call: water supply and electricity were still available in the city centtr of Berdiansk, where they stayed. They've been looking for a fuel but had no idea on where to go next – Zaporizhia or Crimea. Both destinations were not safe to go, but the need was clear: they need to escape the area, through Zaporizhia and then Lviv, or through Crimea and then Turkey or Georgia.



Somehow, they got to Simferopol and then Partenit city, located on the coast of Crimea. Later, they made a decision to fly to Georgia. It wasn't easy to get to the airport safely, nor it was easy to find flight tickets. They managed, and then spent some time at the airport in Georgia, where the decision was made to take a flight to Germany. Physically and emotionally exhausted, they landed in Germany and called their friend, who happened to live in Germany and agreed to host them for some time. My sister and her daughter were safe, hosted in a small town between Bremen and Hamburg, but it took them almost one month to reach safety in the European Union. The husband of my sister stayed in Ukraine, and after ZSU left Mariupol, he managed to escape to the small part of the Donbas region that is still under the control of Ukrainian Armed Forces. For him – the fight is not over yet, for us – he is a hero. They are heroes, my dear brave relatives from Ukraine.

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**Halina Bernadska**

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## **War through my eyes**

**2022...** February... It is winter... I have been waiting for spring... Spring for my son, my little son... On 24th, – I shudder from my loud whispering and catch Sasha's alarmed look.

– Everything is fine! Really... I am trying to answer the question that I saw in the eyes of my son's father. I turn my head to the window to hold back the sobs in my chest that are about to explode, like the news of the beginning of war. The trees, as if in a conspiracy, run after our car with every wind. They never chased like this. Strange... How will they be without their roots!? They will dry up... They will die...

They? People, it is bitter! We are running...

Ukraine's border with Poland. A huge queue of cars. Fear, unknown, human pain blows everywhere. The sky is so sad, gray as women's faces, the sun is almost invisible: Nature seems to have conspired with people. There is a commotion around. The bundle of emotions is growing, growing. Somewhere you can hear: "Skip it, I have small children!" Instead, it sounds like: "There are children in every car here!"

The cars hardly move, as the beads paved the way. Thoughts swirled in my head: "How so? Why? How are the parents and grandmother? How will we be without our dad? How is he here without us? And if something bad happens, what am I supposed to do?" I think and keep quiet.

There are five of us in the car: my son and I, my husband, brother Sashka, and his wife. The man takes us to the border, then we have to go with his brother. Somewhere deep down comes the thought: "What if they stop releasing men? There is a war in the country, men are leaving". I drive away this poisonous reasoning, I don't let it take root in my head. Myron is not calm, he is crying: he got sick the day before. We are moving little by little. It is already getting dark. I catch every piece of land and sky with my eyes, put native words in my heart, because I understand that I am running with my child into a new world for me.

– Will I soon see you again, my Ukraine?

Reminds me of a phone call.

– Hello! Yes, we are on the border. Where are you?

– We are near the Wog gas station. Bodya called and said that men are no longer allowed. He is already at the point for entering the border. Julia went alone!

I am calm, I take this news for granted. I ask the following.

– Do you have seats on the bus?

– Yes.

– Can you take us?

– Yes. – Yes.

We pack our bags, carry Myron in my arms and walk 3 kilometers to my friend. It is already cold outside. The sky is dark. People in cars look at us and do not understand what is happening, but I think they guess. Confusion and sadness can be heard. My Alina calls us from afar. The guys are loading our things. I silently hug my husband, kiss my son and me. I see him averting his eyes.

– I love you, remember that! – he tells us.

– Take care of yourself! – I reply.

And we diverge in different directions. The feeling that a piece of the heart has been torn off. And you have to live on; otherwise there is no way. In the air hangs the aroma of frost and humidity,

mixed with the bitter aftertaste of fear and loneliness, the responsibility, and assigned mission of a woman-guardian.

Men begin to return en masse, women with children remain. A scary picture. I have never seen this before. Surprisingly, children's cries are almost not heard; mothers, grandmothers, cry quietly, swallowing the pain, so as not to frighten their children.

There are 5 women and 2 children in the car. We speak, we cry, and we are silent. Each of us is not yet fully aware of the level of what is happening, each of us is waiting for our trials, which we do not yet know. For a while, we move away from the topic, recall various interesting stories, and share them. The children are sleeping.

There is a knock on the window.

– Can you take two girls?

– No, we are all full. Sorry.

Despair. Myron wakes up, cries, and asks for a pillow. But there is no pillow. My hands are already getting worn out, I put them on the seat. We stand on the border all night. The line moves slowly. It is quiet around, no one is fighting, no one is driving out of line, the tired eyes of the neighbouring cars can be seen.

It is our turn. We pass the check surprisingly quickly. There are a few questions. Poles look on with sympathy, hand over documents, and wish: "Wszystkiego dobrego!"

Today morning, February 25, we are in Poland. I turned and looked to the side of Ukraine. My heart sank: "Hold on, my Nenko! We will see each other soon!"

A difficult period of life outside of the home began. Adaptation to new realities. Every day the news is released with the hope of hearing: "The war is over! We won! Go back!" This has not happened for 60 days. For 60 days, I don't take apart my bags, so that I don't have to waste time collecting. For some it is a small thing, but for me it is like starting a new life here, so my son and I "live on bags".

The day after day passes quickly. We meet March, April, on the threshold of May, time flies, people live, and my Ukraine is burning.

And it hurts unbearably. Now the words “Good afternoon!” are perceived differently. I can't say them, I greet you: “Glory to Ukraine!”

Myron is growing. He knows and feels everything. And in a few weeks he starts speaking Polish. Yes, my two-year-old child does not yet speak Ukrainian well, but he already speaks some words in Polish. At first, I perceive it in two ways: I want him to first master his native language and then learn others. But over time, I understand that I cannot significantly influence this under the current conditions. Convinced, Myron chirped a nightingale. Certainly. Because the language is the code of the nation.

The war showed me not only pain, sadness, tears, hatred, but also LOVE – something different from before. Strange and paradoxical: war is love. Love for life, for humanity, for loved ones, for the country, for every defender and volunteer, for home, for the city, for a stranger with a blue and yellow ribbon, for language, for everything that is so dear to your heart. The hatred for the enemy is proportional to the love I feel. This is my weapon, it is the weapon of every Ukrainian and it distinguishes us from the ferocious orcs. And it is this love for one's family that gives strength to live.

The view outside the window changes: from snowy Christmas trees to blooming trees, from rainy mornings to sunny baths. Never in my life have I been so eager to watch the arrival of spring at home as now. The spring was stolen from me, my hopes were stolen, my peace was stolen.

But when I look at my smiling boy running next to me, I understand that life goes on, life is beautiful because we have a future. It means so much now – to have a future, for us it means – just to live: LIVE at home, at home, with your loved ones. And I appreciate what I have. And thank you for that.

For the first time in our lives, we celebrate Easter not at home, not in the circle of relatives and friends, but in a foreign country. Although Poland is already like a second home, it lacks that festive

feeling. For the first time in my life, I have the desire to bake Easter bread with my own hands. Yes, I feel closer to home. I do everything like my mother and grandmother. And I immerse myself in the atmosphere of wonder, in the atmosphere of home comfort and love... The pachokis were successful (for me this is a good sign): They turned out tasty and beautiful. We pray and taste them. The prayer is now much stronger and always the same: "God, save Ukraine, save the people! Give us a peaceful life!"

I live here, but every day I imagine how my son and I will return to Ukraine. There I will take the earth in my hands, kiss it, and thank God that we are alive again at home!

And then I will return and bow with gratitude to the Polish land:  
– Thank you for your big heart and sincere soul!

## **Besieged Mariupol...**

**O**n February 23, we were rested and happy, riding the Rakhiv-Mariupol train from the Bukovel ski resort, not suspecting what awaits us in our native Mariupol. My husband made an assumption about the war between Russia and Ukraine, and announced to everyone that the Russians would not start hostilities on February 24, for one simple reason, that it would be the day after the Russian national holiday, Defender of the Fatherland Day, which is always celebrated with the use of a huge amount of alcohol, in principle, like all official holidays in Russia. He was not wrong about vodka, but he was wrong about the old grandfather (Putin), who apparently forgot to take the pills, and against the background of the mental crisis that happened, he gave an order to invade Ukraine. Well, as the classic said: "You can't understand Russians with your mind..."

**February 24, 2022**

The morning of the 1st day of the war began with the panic of my eldest daughter Liza, who ran around talking about the details of the Russian attack on Ukraine. She talked about explosions and the bombing of the Vostochnyi district (outskirts of Mariupol from the side of the self-proclaimed DPR), where her boyfriend Yaroslav lives with his parents. My husband Serhii got up before me and already managed to leave for a gas station, because fuel is a very important factor in emergency situations. Then I acted by instinct, it was necessary, firstly, to make the necessary purchases and, secondly, to finish household chores; 3 people were supposed to come (Yaroslav



and his parents Olya and Yura), their windows were shattered by shell fragments and their apartment was crippled. The most important was to make necessary purchases, and that's when I saw for the first time with my own eyes the impending catastrophe: partially blocked roads by military, long queues at gas stations and stores, and empty shelves in the latter. Closer to dinner, Yaroslav arrived with his mother. Her husband stayed there to try to close the broken windows and tidy up the apartment a bit. Later our relatives arrived with their daughter (Alik, Nina and Diana), frightened and confused ... their area is closely adjacent to the East, and therefore the left-bank region suddenly turned from the most rapidly developing into an unsafe one, the explosions were clearly audible there. In the evening, Yura agreed to leave the house under pressure from relatives and the noise of cannonades. In general, we gathered for dinner with 3 families, confused, frightened, but not yet aware of the tragedy...

### **February 25–28, 2022**

These days are like a fog, endless cooking, cleaning, washing and watching the news, 2 TVs are working they show the same thing at the same time, but when there are 10 people in the house, it is difficult to fit in one zone. I'm trying to load myself with a routine so as not to think that the rashists are already close, the shelling is getting louder and we have enough. We often hear an air raid signal and go down to the basement, it should be noted that this skill did not come immediately and at the beginning we either descended like snails, or ran and fell like pins on each other, but nevertheless, by the end of these days, we reached success! Often my brother Igor comes, distinguished by skepticism and love for analytics, he is trying to open our eyes to the fact that Mariupol is practically surrounded, which is very dangerous, given the number of military in the city, in general, is trying in every possible way to persuade us to leave, but we are watching the news, Ukraine repels attacks, there are many reports on the number of destroyed invaders and their equipment, in general, we look to the future with optimism... And we already had

2014 in our lives, when the Armed Forces of Ukraine with Azov quickly pushed away the fascist Russia from Mariupol, and we, frightened by the shellings, left for the Cherkasy region and sat there for a month, fearing military actions. In general, I don't want to leave, we are sitting at home, posting posts about our victory, and fast victory! We sleep in our beds, Yura and Olya go to the next street to my parents for the night. We are making inscriptions on the hands with a waterproof marker with a blood group and Rh, as well as a note in a jacket pocket, which, in case of emergency, is worn by the youngest daughter Veronica with information about her, us and the next of kin, ready to take her under guardianship in case of complete "liberation" from everything and from life too...

### **March 1, 2022**

Part of our friendly company went to donate blood for the needs of the wounded in Mariupol. We've received a message about the teacher of our eldest daughter Tatyana Petrovna. Her car was shot at by the Russian diversionists in the area of the bridge when she was moving in a convoy of cars of civilians and volunteers helping these residents to evacuate from Eastern and Left Bank regions, where it was already very hot and dangerous. Having gunshot wounds she ended up in the regional hospital of Mariupol. She urgently needed medicine and I agreed to help buy and take them.

Pharmacies are either closed, or empty, or selling drugs at inflated prices, but the main thing is that her son can no longer escape from the Left Bank region due to the incessant shelling.

My house is located in the Primorsky district, the village of Zapadny, where it was still quite quiet. We've learned to move to the basement very fast, although as it will turn out later, it's completely in vain! All the explosions and shots that seem loud and scary to us, in reality they were very far away...

### **March 2, 2022**

There are four of us, we are going to the blood transfusion center to donate blood in the morning, it's quite loud and dangerous

around, we're used to it, we don't pay attention anymore. There are a lot of people on the streets, there are queues in shops and for imported water. All this morning woke up without electricity supply in their homes, and we hoped it would be only for a short period of time, but our hopes were not destined to come true, next time turn on we will be able to have it only in Zaporizhzhia...

We were not able to donate blood because of the absence of electricity in the blood transfusion center. I was able to visit my daughter's wounded teacher, laying sick in the dark and cold hospital, because there was no heating, no light, and lying in wards with glazed windows is not safe (while writing these lines, almost a month has passed since there is no hearing from Tatyana Petrovna). We did not expect that when Hell would break loose, we will be warned only by the rumble of an approaching Rashist bomber! In the first half of the day I found out that my brother went crazy and decided to break out on his own from Mariupol towards Zaporizhzhia, not waiting for the official humanitarian corridors to open. Igor said that he had seen and passed the checkpoints of the Rashists, damaged and burnt military equipment and the shot cars of civilians. That day he said to me: "If I had to repeat this path again, I would not have dared! Oh Igor ... if you saw and heard what we experienced, then that path would seem like a trifle to you, as it will be with us in less than 2 weeks from now...

And March 2 for all Mariupol residents was the last day of communication with relatives, both in the city and beyond.

On this day, our mobile communications were turned off and thereby completely disorientated the population of a fairly large city. Mobile connection was only present in some locations of the city (Kyivstar office, a temple under construction in downtown) there were always a lot of people trying to get through to at least someone and find out news about evacuation, humanitarian corridors, about loved ones and relatives, and all the rest, in the old fashioned way,

either went to their relatives and loved ones on foot or drove by cars, but day by day it became more more dangerous...

**March 3–5, 2022**

These days, absolutely black, impenetrable nights came upon us. Mariupol plunges into darkness, in hope to survive, and in the morning the light of the sun covers the smoke, it carries burning smell from all sides. We try not to leave the house, windows and doors boarded up or covered by everything that came to hand, but those of us who do go out, see more and more fires and destruction around us, clouds of black smoke from all sides enveloped our beautiful city, the air filled with stench and a premonition of impending disaster...

Of the benefits of civilization, we have only gas left, with the help of which we can cook and heat food. Thankfully we live in a private house and we have the opportunity to collect rainwater and have a couple of bottles of drinking water, which will later help us survive. We also have products! My grandparents also taught me that in the house I should always have a supply of food, my husband was periodically indignant that I was buying pasta when there was still a pack, but apparently, I have this in my blood (to stock up), grandparents went through the war ... we still have everything ahead. So while we can eat several times a day ... sometimes standing and listening to the cannonades, sometimes sitting in the basement, but the main thing is that we no longer can eat calmly and slowly, food is no longer pleasure and enjoyment, it is only a source of strength and an opportunity to survive the coming hell.

The worst thing these days was the appearance of mobile artillery in our area. We pray to God that he removed somewhere a mortar man who drives a truck through the streets of a peaceful village and continuously hammers in towards Krasnoflotska Street and the village of Manhush, where the Russians are trying to break through on the outskirts of our city.

Sometimes prayers turn into curses towards this “protector”, because Russian response comes in 5 to 15 minutes. What was it? Provocation or “bait fishing” we probably won't find out, but I will definitely remember that feeling when you count down and mentally say goodbye to life.

On the evening of the 5th, a family from the left-bank district (another one) comes to us, they spent several days in the basement and in a half-hour relative break in shelling, they risked escaping to us, in the hope that it was quieter in our area, but we have been sleeping all these days fully dressed, often in the basement, or at least regularly going down into it. At one of the nights I passed out in the transition between the house and the garage on a bean bag and by morning I complained that everything hurts from inconvenience, what is inconvenient we all learn the next day.

On the 5th, Yaroslav communicates with his mother for the last time ... in the evening he went to my parents and talked with his. This day was also remembered for the failed humanitarian corridor for the departure of civilians, there was a huge column of cars gathered, the first hysteria that covered almost all women from 6 to 60 years old happened during the emergency loading. But the corridor is canceled and the incessant firing of heavy weapons from both sides is a vivid confirmation of this, they turned us around and announced that when agreements were reached on the subject of the corridor, police cars with loudspeakers will drive through the streets and announce the evacuation... hundreds of thousands of Mariupol residents believe this statement, tens of thousands of citizens will never get this promised salvation from hell, into which a prosperous city on the shores of the Sea of Azov has already turned...

The whole night from the 5th to the 6th of March was nightmarish, someone slept in the basement, those who could no longer sit there and considered themselves very brave people fell somewhere in the house, but all of them shuddered every time the house began to vibrate from nearby projectiles.

### **March 6, 2022**

In the morning shelling, my mother and Olya tried to run to us from a neighbouring street, but another shelling of our village forced them to return home to my parents and go down to the basement, and literally a few hours later it was our “square” that was shelled, the hits turned out to be very destructive (several neighbouring houses burned down) and very fatal – one of the many fragments that pierced my parents' fence became the killer of a wife and mother, the tragedy and grief of more than one family, and the first and most nightmarish of what will happen to us next.

My dad, probably the only one who tried to help everyone between shelling (ran and put out fires, cut off the gas) ran and took Yaroslav away so that they could urgently take the wounded Olya to the hospital together. We sat and for some time earnestly prayed that Olya would survive until the next shelling of our “square” began. Everyone was already simply, loudly, without stopping, repeating one single phrase: “Lord, save and save!” This was our salvation and stopped us going crazy until the BM-21 discharges shifted to other squares and there was a relative calm ... When after another shelling, we got out of the basement and saw the blazing roofs of neighbouring houses around us, fragments in our house, crippled cars in the yard, only one thought visited everyone – to run! Previously we concluded that in the event of force majeure, our next home will be the Alik's electrical goods store, located in the Central District and in close proximity to the Drama Theatre, which has been the center of information of our city. Our company of 2 families jumped into the cars and began to get out of the hell into which our village was turning, on the way we all looked out the windows of the car and did not recognize our beautiful, prosperous Primorsky district, destruction from shells, burnt houses and apartments, cars and public transport. The distance between my house and the Drama Theatre is 4 km, but there was a feeling that we all were in a different era, a parallel reality, a film about the apocalypse ... at those

who stood near PSTU (it will also be bombed soon) we (lost and crushed) asked the policemen where to go, to which we received a very unequivocal answer: "There is no safe place in Mariupol!" They suggested we go to the bomb shelter in the sports club Terrasport (subsequently, more than 2,000 Mariupol residents were deported from it to Russia), thank God we went to Alik's store...

I must say that I can't remember what time it all happened, we were all stunned and lost, only when I arrived at the centre did I realize that all this time I had been driving my car in galoshes, Nina and the children were sent to the basement – bomb shelter, the situation there was terrible – cold, drafts, dust in such a column that it was impossible and the worst thing is total darkness. Everyone else tried to pull themselves together and start unloading the battered cars, remove glass fragments from things and at least somehow prepare the rooms in which we planned to spend the night (without windows and with thick walls), and for this it was necessary to take out a lot of electrical goods from the warehouse. We spent the night in clothes, shoes and everything that could be found in a cold store warehouse on a concrete floor covered with cardboard (there was enough of it). And now we had access to strategically important batteries and flashlights, most of which Alik donated to the first days of the war for the defence, but a little was left for our personal use and for exchange! Cigarettes were first changed (women soon closed this option), cereals, butter and other products. For the first time in our lives, we were faced with the absolute uselessness of money, no one needed it, only water, food and fuel were valued.

By evening, my father brought Yaroslav and our friends, who had arrived the day before from the left bank and settled in my house, brother who left earlier, so we became 12 out of 8 permanent cohabitants (plus a dog and a cat). The first night is a nightmare – wild cold and pain all over the body, and also wild anxiety for the relatives left in the village, and Olya and Yura, who remained in

hospital. Everyone greeted the morning with relief and anxiety at the same time. Serhii and Yaroslav took my car and went to the hospital and how I hoped for my parents in the village. While they were away, we were trying to establish acceptable living conditions in storage rooms, now there was no gas either.

Soon Serhii, Yaroslav and Yura returned with terrible news that Olya had died yesterday from a head wound and without regaining consciousness ... my parents refused to leave the house, and Yura became the 13th member of our group (9 adults and 4 children) and the saviour of all women, because he took over the cooking, and we allowed ourselves to be in prostration and shock, performing automatically the necessary actions dictated by the need to survive.

### **March 7–9, 2022**

On the second or third day of our stay in the store, the military opened the grocery store, located opposite ours, a crowd of hungry and desperate people immediately gathered behind them, the military took a few bottles of water and bread for themselves, and the rest of the products were already taken by ordinary people who just needed to survive, we were allowed to take everything except alcohol and we managed to get a box of biscuits, a stick of sausage, a few packs of juice, wet wipes and a few hygienic lipsticks, which later helped a lot in conditions of incessant thirst and cold, but our main prey was water!!!

Soon we came to our senses a little and realized that you can only eat hot once a day (lack of food and danger to life during cooking – this is what this decision was dictated by). In the early days of our stay in the centre it was relatively quiet, not completely, just the cannonades were at a relative distance from us, we ventured several times to go to our house for rainwater, food and everything warm and soft that was at home and could be laid on cardboard for warmth and very relative comfort. At night the temperature in our impromptu bedroom rose to 12 degrees Celsius, during the day at



best it was from 7 to 9 degrees, we would only warm up in Zaporizhzhia. It was much colder in the warehouse of the store, and even more so in the basement bomb shelter.

Now our cooking has become more complicated, on the fire, with the wind and constant explosions around, all food and drink with flavors of smoke, but these are happy moments ... more and more often we are forced to go down to the basement, into the cold, pitch darkness, drafts and wild dust, someone coughed, someone cried, someone tried to sleep, grannies wailed and repeated how hard it is for them, and in all this chaos children ran, raising the very dust, and almost no one stopped ... adults looked with longing at the children who had not yet forgotten how to play and enjoy life ...

On one of the days we saw snow falling in the morning, which was almost immediately swept away by the inhabitants of the yard and the dwellers (like us) into buckets, hoping to get at least a small supply of technical, but still such desperately needed water.

**March 10, 2022**

We woke up from sounds that we already knew well – they were bombing very close, someone was praying, someone started to gather in order to make the children go into the basement. As expected, mortars covered the neighbouring yard where they hit our wrecked cars and a dozen others, my car got hit hard – no windows, no wheels, an explosion bent the left side and pierced with fragments in several places, but it did not burn out like 4 cars standing next to each other (together with garages and belongings of people from our yard). Later we learned that 2 wounded men whom my husband helped to get into the car (immediately after the shelling he ran to see what was happening with our cars) apparently just drained the gasoline in my car and possibly in the neighbouring ones, when several shells flew into the parking lot ... instant karma, though this doesn't make it any easier, because my car was left broken there anyway.

Meanwhile, we went to the drama theatre every day, there was a crowd of people who have lost their homes and everything they had, waiting for the “green corridor” and the chance to evacuate from hell. We went there one at a time, several times a day, but every time came back with nothing. And the nightmare was getting closer, they were constantly bombing Azovstal mercilessly, which was clearly visible from the windows of the upper floors of our temporary house and was located several kilometres from us and the historical center of Mariupol.

These days, active bombing of areas located near the centre began, and we already distinguished shots of mortars, BM-21 shells, tanks and something else very similar to BM-21, but exploding, albeit with many discharges, but a bit differently, so we learned what air bombs are and I want to express our general opinion – this is the worst thing, what we heard and felt.

During one of his trips to the drama theater, Serhii met an acquaintance who, after air strikes on the village of Parkovyi, directly adjacent to the centre, lost everything he had, but was able to take his wife and children out, and they also dug up a neighbour and everyone hid in the drama theatre, but there was such a crowd that he gladly accepted the invitation to go to our basement, to the corner next to us and his family sat there almost without getting out all the remaining days.

Hell was getting closer, another explosion broke the windows and walls in our shelter, the evacuation was announced in the morning and in the evening, but each time it failed, and hope of salvation melted away.

### **March 13, 2022**

In the morning I had a terrible dream that my parents fell asleep in the basement and they couldn't escape. There was a heavy shelling in the morning, but during a lull around 15.00 I ran home without saying a word to anyone. Over the past days during which

the phone turned into an absolutely useless thing, I was so unaccustomed to it (I need a flashlight, and not a discharged mobile phone), that I didn't take it with me on that trip through the broken, mutilated city, so I captured all that horror only in my mind ... it's like in a post-apocalyptic movie, scared, dirty, hungry people wildly looking around, in all the yards there is smoke either from fires or from dying or blazing in all apartments, houses, cars. Our Pryazovskyi University and nearby Giprometz were destroyed by the recent air raid, and between them crumpled cars riddled with fragments, the dead people have already been taken away, but bloodstains on the pavement were clearly visible... The 3rd city hospital with the newly renovated children's building was destroyed!

And on that day, as I was running along Nakhimov Avenue (not Bandera, mind you) in the direction of the City Garden, I saw something that we all hated and at the same time feared most of all – the plane, so white and very loud, having made several circles over the city, it dropped a bomb on a parachute, which slowly descended wildly and exploded in the same area City garden. There was only one thought: “How can you be such a beast to drop bombs on a peaceful city?!” But the goal was to see my relatives and I went further, the sight of the village bombed, charred and deserted plunged me into shock, but my house and the house of my parents were still almost intact!!! I had to climb over the fence, maybe to shout to the parents who were sitting in the basement was unrealistic, and now they were alive and wildly frightened, hugging, crying, retelling to each other news, but the main thing was that everyone was alive, and I, having collected another armful of warm clothes, crossed my parents and my beloved house (I don't know if I will ever see it again) moved back. I must say that in fleece pyjamas, vest, terry dressing gown and jacket with a fox collar, all sooty and skinned, I walked through the broken city almost happy that my dream is just a game of my crippled consciousness.

Another good event of this day is the appearance of mobile communications in the very centre of the city near the cathedral and Drama Theatre. We were finally able to call my brother, who “delighted” me with the news that Mariupol cannot be unoccupied, because at the moment our command considers this impossible and we are now all heroes and victims, like in war films about Leningrad and its blockade ... very honourable of course (sarcasm), but after a week of living in a bomb shelter and a store and two weeks in hell, I didn’t want to die, and most importantly, I had to save the children!

### **March 14, 2022**

At lunch, Serhii and Yaroslav went to exchange the diode strip with batteries for food and came with the most long-awaited news that people from Mariupol on their own!!! Began to break out of the city towards Berdyansk! My husband took a phone from one of the daredevils and agreed to call in a few hours in order to find out the route and situation on the road. A few hours after that, Serhii ran from the Drama Theatre shouting Let's go! And we began to randomly sort things, but then the most pragmatic of us began to doubt the expediency and reality, so we stayed. All evening we made plans for what time we would leave tomorrow, sometimes there were some breaks between shelling, when they bombed a little less often and we really wanted to get into this interval. Almost happy we all went to bed and slept for several hours, after 24.00 a pitch hell began, they bombed us endlessly in our area, but the worst thing is that the planes were no longer buzzing to the side, but above us and were continuously dropping bombs, roar, shaking walls, crumbling plaster, the glow from explosions here and there and the vibrations of the earth from these explosions led to a state of panic horror. For all 6 hours of this hell I sat over 6-year-old Veronica and I prayed, sometimes it was the words of all the prayers that I knew, but more often in horror I could only whisper endlessly, “Lord bless and save!” Time dragged on endlessly and it seemed this night would never end.

### **March 15, 2022**

Morning came, at 6 in the morning Serhii ran to the parking lot to find out if we still had transport (I also prayed, because if it is not there, then there is no evacuation either, Ukrainian buses take people only from Berdyansk, and it is 90 km to Berdyansk and it is extremely difficult to walk such a path on foot with children) and he returned with good news. Further loading, all exhausted, nervous, but very active. Our column began to form in the yard, we had 4 cars and 3 more neighbours joining us. By 8 am everyone is ready, but the general decision is to wait for the formation of the main column near the drama theatre by 9.00 and join it. Time drags on unbearably slowly and at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> we hear how they start hitting us with a mortar, the sound is such that it seems to be right in the store, but we understand that it is in a neighboring yard and everyone is aware – then there will be a responding shot somewhere here, a silent movie – we can't move, loaded cars in the yard, outside the door, and within 10 minutes several projectiles hit the roof of our house. There is a wild roar outside, the sound of breaking glass, slate and metal grinding, as well as clumps of dust after part of the roof fell on our long-suffering cars. We all look at each other and think that we have nothing left, but God saved us again, the unfinished is finished off, but the cars are on the move, on a wild adrenaline rush we sweep pieces of slate from hoods and roofs and nails from under the wheels (a punctured wheel is a disaster), jump into the car and we rush to the drama theatre, there we see a gathering column, but the wild horror of what we have just experienced drives us away from centre, to the sea, along which lies our path to salvation. Only the next day we will all know that it was the last time we saw the drama theatre as a whole and near it a huge number of people with children, and the inscription children, which these people wrote in hope ... on the 16th in the evening we will all cry about them, about people who were killed immediately and buried alive under the

rubble, about hundreds of children who were guilty before the rashists only because they were born or lived in Ukrainian Mariupol!

But then in the morning we had the only desire – to survive, I looked at the sea in tears, so calm and dear. I didn't know when I could see it again. Cars began rushing past us, also having the same inscriptions CHILDREN, they emerged from different streets, drove along the oncoming lane, drove around burned-out cars and shell craters in a single impulse with us – Escape from hell. So we got to the Melekinsky checkpoint, saw piles crumpled, burned-out military equipment, mines on the roads, and here and there broken peaceful cars, but the roar became quieter and quiter, the cinder from the endless ashes of Mariupol was less and less concentrated and we rushed forward, towards armoured personnel carriers and military vehicles with the hated letter Z in Manhush, from which artillery shots were poured over our peaceful city all these 2 weeks. Through tears in my eyes, I looked at these non-humans, outwardly so similar to us, and could not understand WHAT they do and why?

In Manhush, we made a short stop to coordinate the route and then drove towards Berdyansk along the occupied territory, somehow it turned out that it was our car that turned out to be leading at the beginning of our mini-columns, and then all that huge number of cars traveling from hell. No matter how fast we move there were no people who wanted to overtake us, everyone was frightened by the sight of mines lying on the road and burnt military equipment.

Then the road through endless villages and the first rashist checkpoint – wildness ... when the occupiers, located on your land checking your documents. Parallel reality – solid half-swastika in the form of the letter Z, hated tricolors and full game – the flags of the USSR! Where these nonhumans crawled out from, one can only guess, but in my representation, when a young man carries the flag of the Komsomol for the purpose of installation, it means either he or

his brain have been frozen for more than 30 years of evolution. Endless checks of documents, phones, cars, the same questions, to which rashists get the same answers, and I noticed that there were much more (my personal sense of self) “positive” rashists ran out, in my opinion they were either degenerates, or weak-minded, or actors very well posing as such, they did not seem to understand us and the machines by the appearance of what they had done with us and our lives. The last rashist checkpoint (and there were more than 15 of them) and we are on neutral territory, so to speak, now to leave here and get to our people alive!

Then there was a trip through the village with burning fields, around the cemetery, past exploding cars, peaceful, who were unlucky enough to touch the mines on the side of the road, and we are part of a column whose end is not visible either ahead or behind the first Ukrainian checkpoint!! We begin to rejoice and thank God for salvation, but it turns out prematurely. All these hundreds of cars are kept until it starts to get dark, at the same time checking documents and only under the cover of night we start moving. We drive in the dark, with the headlights off, following in the footsteps of those of the car in front, then stop on the track for another 20 minutes, we pray and what we most feared begins – shelling... whose it was was not clear and where, but there were no explosions (only shells were visible, which, like fireflies, fly up) and we were finally moving! For a long time! Scary! Dark! On a detour through the villages, but here it is – a darkened Zaporizhzhia and we were probably saved!

Next was the refugee center (you need to get used to this word), checking documents and photographing us, in we did not go to the resettlement center, we decided to rent a 3-room apartment for 4 families, iwhich it seemed to us very spacious and simply breathtakingly warm and light, the first shower in 3 weeks for all 13 members of the team.

Almost everyone has a bed.

None of our family has ever (including 2014) had problems with self-identification - we have always been and we will be Ukrainians, my eldest did not even want to consider entering foreign universities... Ukraine is her homeland, and the youngest, although she speaks Russian, always and everywhere says that she is Ukrainian! Perhaps that is why we are the first relaxed ... for the first time there were no rashists nearby, for the first time in 3 weeks we could sleep peacefully...

**March 16, 2022**

The morning began around 5 o'clock with 2 clearly distinguishable explosions, an adrenaline rush into the blood and the thought "is it really hell again?", but thank God that was all. The first bread in 2 weeks is the most delicious and desirable for everyone, besides, you can drink as much as you want! But normal eating is still out of habit – standing and in a hurry, coffee with milk and tea does not smell smoke, and then again time to move on, away from the explosions, war, fear and horrors experienced by all of us for these long almost three weeks and from my beloved hometown, in which relatives, home, hopes for the future and our hearts...

P.S. Then there was a road to Rivne with one more overnight stay in Kropyvnytskyi, thanks to our responsive volunteers and ordinary people, they helped with accommodation, food, and things. We lived in Rivne and in the house with a dozen refugees, and then moved into an apartment with friends. On the way there was a division of our group, one of the families went to Khmelnytskyi, the second to Vinnytsia and we were left as part of 6 people.

A few weeks after the horror experienced, hours of viewing photos of the destroyed Mariupol and the search for relatives and friends in social networks (the feed of all Mariupol residents is almost identical – search for missing persons, joyful news about the found relatives and tragic reports of the death of adults, adolescents and babies), after constant dreams and thoughts about home, news



about the war, about the occupied and newly liberated cities of Ukraine the heart still hurts. We are still not used to the fact that you can drink plenty of water, eat slowly, enjoying the process and the youngest daughter is still afraid to sit near the window. We are all wounded, thank God such wounds do not require surgical intervention, I hope time will heal them a little. Now we need to wait for the return of the remaining relatives from hell, for a Mariupol citizen to appear on the network after March 2 is the same as resurrecting! We are all in shock and despair after what was seen on the video, completely destroyed and burned out our last house on Kuindzhi street ... after realizing that we were very lucky to be saved in time, but many of those who were cooking nearby were sweeping snow, whose children in the short minutes of breaks in shelling ran with ours and laughed ... well, many of these people were not lucky, someone hoped that they would not hit the historical centre, someone decided to stay in their home until the end, someone decided to wait for the evacuation, there are many reasons, but the realization that all these people were unlucky to be in the house at that moment when a shell flew into it ... this realization breaks the soul and does not allow it to calm down, as it turned out, the orcs anyway, they do not care about people, history, buildings, churches, inscriptions CHILDREN ... and hope that this nation will come to their senses, seeing the horror from which the whole world shudders, it's no longer necessary ... my heart is longing for my home, the brain blocks the complete realization of the thought that Mariupol has been destroyed and the vile subconscious will once again bring a dream about a loved one at night house, about a peaceful city by the sea, about walking in the parks with my youngest daughter, when the acacia is in bloom, about our hikes on foot from home to a new pier, about wakeboard rides in our warm Sea of Azov, about such beloved three-day trips to the Belosarayska spit with diving for mussels, about our whole happy life in our

native, warm, windy city by the sea, and when I wake up I will understand that there is none of this anymore...

What can I say ... life has changed completely, turned over and probably there is no turning back, but there is no acceptance of this terrible happening, no humility, no understanding of how to keep on living ... you go shopping, you see people hurrying somewhere, joyful children on the playgrounds, and sometimes you catch yourself thinking that it cannot be at the same time such a bloody massacre in my Mariupol and a peaceful, calm life in other cities ... but that's exactly how it is, people still continue dying there from hunger and thirst, and most importantly from shells and shrapnel ... and I can't do anything to deal with this tragedy, and also while I can't do anything with my life...broken and lost like my hometown. Leaving, probably, each resident took a piece of our native Mariupol in his heart. And we will definitely collect it ... Piece by piece ... In Ukraine.

## **War in Ukraine: when the impossible became a reality**

**T**hey say that even the darkest night ends sooner or later with dawn...

For Ukraine, such a night has come and has been going on since February 24, 2022, when the army of the bloody dictator Putin launched the first rockets on a peaceful territory in the heart of Europe. The rockets were followed by a ground offensive and airstrikes by the Russian army against the capital city of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, which planned to welcome spring with joy soon, but instead met countless bombs, tanks, artillery, barbarians in soldier's uniforms and ... ugly death. In other words, they met the "Russian world" in all its infernal beauty and beastliness.

A month has passed since then, and it feels like an eternity! During this time, entire cities and towns in the north, south and east of the country disappeared from the face of the earth. The hearts of thousands of children, women and men – the innocent sons and daughters of our blessed land – have stopped beating forever. Millions of Ukrainians left their own homes or what was left of them as a result of the Russian invasion, to be forced to go into the unknown, seeking salvation and shelter abroad or in other regions of the bleeding Ukraine that have not yet been torn apart.

Agreed, not so long ago, such an apocalyptic scenario, which even the main villain of the last century, Hitler, would envy, was impossible to imagine on the territory of the flourishing European

continent. However, the reality turned out to be much darker. Moreover, even more cruel than yesterday's cannibalistic fantasies and threats of numerous Russian propagandists. Yes, almost every day during the last years, they openly threatened to bomb Kyiv, to destroy Ukrainians just for their language, or to forcefully return the original Slavic nation to the bosom of the "Russian world" on TV screens or on the Internet.

However, the reality that Ukraine faced at the end of February was even more ruthless than these obsessive delusions of Putin's propagandists. Suffice it to say that the main blow and atrocities of the occupying army fell precisely on the Russian-speaking cities – Kharkiv, Sumy, Mariupol, Chernihiv, etc. It is unlikely that the propaganda asset of the main war criminal of the 21st century could imagine that the Russian-speaking residents of the mentioned cities, by the way, historically oriented towards and loyal to the Russian Federation, would become the main target for the "second army of the world". What they arrogantly call their army...

And they did, because despite all the predictions of cabinet strategists from the Kremlin, Kharkiv residents and Ukrainians from other cities did not come out with flowers, but met the occupier from the East with the usual Russian checkmate and Molotov cocktails. Apparently, this angered the Kremlin boss so much that a decision was made to erase these Ukrainian cities from the map of Europe. Erase together with the disobedient and freedom-loving people!

It would seem that nothing threatens the plans of the invaders and the unexpected resistance of the Ukrainians will be overcome, albeit with a certain delay in time, but the reality once again came as a surprise to many.

It turned out that there is a combat-capable army in Ukraine, which, despite all the skeptical forecasts of authoritative domestic and foreign experts, was able, gritting its teeth, to withstand the first insidious blow of the enemy, to recover from it within a week or

two, and then to take up the reliable defence of the native land on the entire front line with the idea of a future counteroffensive. Was it possible to believe in this in the first days of the war, especially given the assurances of the same “analysts” that Kyiv would fall to its knees in 3–5 days from the beginning of the Russian aggression?! Absolutely not, but the reality, according to tradition, surprised, first of all, the Russian invader, whose blitzkrieg failed miserably. And now, in front of this reality, odes are being sung all over the world, from America to Australia, admiring the unprecedented courage, ingenuity and heroism of our people and its armed forces. Being Ukrainian today is fashionable and prestigious! At least, according to the words that are heard from everywhere.

The reality in which Ukraine found itself due to the fault of the “liberators” debunked another myth that the government and the people are independent. In peacetime, the highest leadership of the country could quite justifiably be treated differently: accused of corruption, reprimanded for social and economic miscalculations, not well perceived due to lack of proper statesmanship experience, etc. At the same time, probably few Ukrainians will be able to deny that in the most dramatic period of the state's modern history, its government is with the people. It did not leave its high offices and go into comfortable exile abroad, as it was offered more than once, but remained in the thousand-year-old Kyiv to fight back the occupier in a righteous way on its land and with its people.

The new reality that emerged after Russia's attack forces us to look at the people of Ukraine in a different way. Of course, we are noticeably different – in language, faith, habits, traditions and political views. They were different... In the times of the current inhumane trials that have befallen us, we have become one, despite all the past differences, disagreements and disputes. Today, Ukrainians are one big family whose members, some at the front and some at the rear, stood side by side to protect their Motherland. And

it makes no difference whether you are rich or poor, what language you speak, what church you go to, or what ideals you profess. The main thing now is to achieve such a desired victory over the hated enemy through joint efforts, through blood and sweat, pain and suffering. By the way, thanks to him too (no matter how paradoxical it sounds), because it was he who united our souls and ardent hearts, which are now beating in unison for a common great goal in this truly patriotic war!

Russia's war against Ukraine destroyed a number of other stereotypes for the first time or for the second time. For example, about the invincibility of the "second army of the world", which actually turned out to be not as formidable (and thank God!) as it was portrayed by the Russian mass media and generals. About the effectiveness of leading international organizations or military-political blocs, which in fact are unable to stop the unjustified aggression of one country towards another. About the inviolability of international security guarantees, regardless of who signed them. What are the signatures of guarantor countries under the same Budapest memorandum worth? Rhetorical question. In short, the reality, as it often happens, turned out to be completely different from expectations.

In view of the last lines, the people of Ukraine should abandon certain vain hopes and do the righteous thing themselves – work daily and hourly for victory in the war with Russia. Yes, it will be difficult and painful more than once, there will be new destruction and losses, grief and tears, but they will surely be followed by the dream dawn. Ukrainian dawn...

## **Will we overcome the Kremlin Wall?**

**F**or 20 difficult days, my country has been on fire and bathed in the blood of innocent people. For 20 days, we have been trying to fight the occupiers who come to our land and call themselves liberators. For 20 days, we defend our truth and history, not just our land. So when the first rumours about a possible Russian invasion appeared in November 2021, my colleagues and I were very worried about it. To calm ourselves down, we monitored articles and video blogs of political analysts who argued that Russia would not attack, and if it did, it would be a short war that would end in victory for Ukraine. In fact, with the slogan “everything will be fine”, we went on winter vacation, after which the feeling of anxiety returned with the news of joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises. “Russia and Belarus are preparing for war with Ukraine in early February”, “Russia will attack Ukraine in two weeks”, “Russian troops will invade Ukrainian lands on February 16... February 19 –” – all these threatening reports of a possible attack by the Russian Federation tomorrow made the threat of war a routine, and we lost concern about it.

We ignored the data on the full-scale attack on Russia because it seemed absurd at some point (I assume that it falls in general in February 2022). Most people did not believe that the Russian Federation could advance beyond Donbas. It still seems like a nightmare: a country that declares itself democratic is openly attacking a neighbouring democracy and christening it a “military operation”. The morning of February 24, the Ukrainian people will

never be able to forget because it marked the end of the era of old Ukraine and the beginning of a new page of struggle. We have become different in the last 20 days. This “difference” first appeared during the Maidan, when Ukrainians defended their right to freedom.

On February 24, at 5:30, I woke up to an unknown sound, a violent, sharp noise, signalling the beginning of something terrible. My news feed was full of reports of explosions in Kyiv, Dnipro, Lutsk, Odesa, Kharkiv... The whole country was terrorized simultaneously. The explanation was a single headline: “At about 4:00 am, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of a special military special operation in Ukraine”.

We are those who were born in security and peace and did not believe at the beginning of a full-scale Russian invasion. We did not want to assume the possibility of war in our time because these are unrealistic events in a democratic world. The war existed somewhere in the past or somewhere far away, but not here and now.

Immediately after the missile gifts, Ukrainian society began to respond both in real and virtual terms. As a result, several fronts have emerged in Ukraine, namely military, volunteer and virtual. People clearly understood that the country needed not only an army but also a virtual army, a specific cyber front. During the eight years of war in eastern Ukraine, citizens have learned to counter fakes and filter information. The most important war of today is the war for human thinking. During the first two weeks of the war, Ukrainians were in a tense information environment, which shocked with a wealth of information: the latest news about the Russian invasion, meetings of politicians, speech by President Zelensky, volunteer information, forecasts of military analysts and political scientists. Despite this dominance of data, users of social networks were not disrupted and tried to join the fight against the occupier.

For many years, Russia has been investing heavily in propaganda and sponsoring media worldwide. Pro-Russian television in Ukraine



was not perceived as hostile until 2014. After the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas, the Ukrainian authorities finally saw the danger of Russian propaganda and began to fight it. I believe it would be appropriate to use the term “Kremlin wall” for this type of propaganda because, in its foundations, the “Russian measure” propaganda has a Soviet ideology and is aimed at people who lived in Soviet times. There are evident in the rhetoric of the Russian government. The Russian military came to Ukraine to liberate the people from the Bandera neo-Nazis and to disarm the Ukrainian army for peace between Ukraine and Russia. Putin’s statement of February 24, 2022, clearly traces the two main currents of Russia’s propaganda, anti-nationalism and anti-westernisation.

Like the Soviet Union, Russia is trying to suppress any national ideas in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, the concepts of nationalism and Nazism are identical for most Russians. The term “Bandera”, which Putin “christened” Ukrainian nationalists in 2014, was used by Soviet propaganda as synonymous with looting and banditry, not as soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. In essence, the Bandera-following played the role of an internal enemy from which the Soviet government liberated its people.

As for the image of the external enemy, it has always been the West, regardless of whether it was Europe or America. Ukrainian historian Oleksandr Zaitsev spoke about the origins of Russian anti-Westernism at a UCU seminar. In particular, the author notes that the idea of hostility to the West dates back to imperial times and plays an essential role in consolidating Russia. The Russian government is in no way seeking to develop its state. Still, it simply pumps resources and capital out of the country to establish a comfortable life in the same hostile West. That is why Russians have never been, are not and cannot be part of the European community – for them, European values are alien.

As a result of information intelligence on social networks, Ukrainians have learned that Russians do not need the truth. They are happy to live in the hyperreality that the Putin regime has created for them. For them, there is only one truth – the speech of the dictator from the Kremlin. The wall of the Kremlin's propaganda wall is solid and able to “protect” Russian citizens from the truth of the Western world. Using hate speech against the world, Russian propagandists will provide stable support for killings and looting in Ukraine and the EU. Unfortunately, none of Russia's dictators and propagandists will be held accountable for their ruthless, inhumane policies. If Russia loses this war, Russian propagandists will change their rhetoric and pretend to be innocent victims of the Putin regime, as Maria Ovsyannikova did. Russians are never responsible for their actions, and they are always innocent soldiers.

*16.03.2022 Dnipro*

## **A Letter from Ukraine**

**I**t is 5 am, February 24, 2022. Sleep interrupts the trembling of walls and windows. I understood: a powerful explosion, the second, third... Is it a war? Yes, it is a war...

This moment divided life into before and now... Peaceful life with interesting work and a lot of grand plans has passed into a stage of uncertainty, fear, despair, anticipation...

*About events.* The first weeks of the war passed as one day, but according to the same scenario: news, work activities, discussion of military events with family and friends, news again. Events related to the occupation made their adjustments. On the fourth day of the war, the city of Berdiansk was occupied. As a result – the work of the humanitarian centre, the connection of the legitimate government of the city with the citizens through underground channels, devastated in a few days shelves in stores (you can buy water, potatoes, carrots, onions). Of course, the delivery of new goods to Berdiansk became impossible.

The lack of cash and the inability to withdraw it at ATMs was a serious challenge for the people of Berdiansk (daily queues at ATMs for 500–1000 people when there is an Internet connection).

As a result of the accident on the gas pipeline near Mariupol on March 7, Berdiansk was left without gas and heating. As a consequence – a large load on the grid and serious accidents, so some areas of the city are without light and heat, and the inability to bake bread in the bakery in the usual amount. I have never seen such queues for bread in my life – 150–200 m.

The lack of mobile communication, the Internet, and Ukrainian TV channels was another very serious challenge for the people of Berdiansk. There is continuous pro-Russian propaganda on local TV and radio. It feels like you are in an information vacuum.

*About security.* It is very dangerous in occupied Berdiansk. Orcs are scurrying through the streets in armored personnel carriers and other military equipment. Armed to the teeth, military patrols roam the city's streets as masters, persuading city officials to cooperate, forcing local entrepreneurs to re-register their businesses, looking for local activists, and "conducting political talks with them". During the first week of the occupation in Berdiansk, peaceful rallies were actively held under the slogan "Berdiansk is Ukraine!" My husband and I also went to rallies. Then a horde from the quasi-republic of the DNR arrived in Berdiansk and began to disperse the protesters, put them in paddy wagons, and torture them. Some activists have been released, some are still being held.

*About cohesion.* Despite the difficult situation in occupied Berdiansk, the citizens rallied and help each other. For more than a month now, the city has been accepting Mariupol residents who have literally escaped from hell. The places of their location are schools, kindergartens, and recreation centres. Refugees are helped by both the legitimate city government and the citizens. They bring food, personal hygiene items, clothes, etc. to temporary shelters. Mothers with small children are taken home. There is no one left in the city.

*About feelings.* I am the mother of a ten-year-old pupil and a twenty-year-old student at one of the universities in Kharkiv. What are the feelings of a mother of a child who has not attended any lessons since February 24, has not communicated offline with her classmates, and has not walked on the playground, because it can be mined. How does it feel to have a son who has been constantly in the shelter of a dormitory in the city, which is constantly under fire, for

more than 10 days. What it feels like to have a son who counts “arrivals” and “departures” during the day... And when my son managed to get to a safer place with friends, I had the first emotion – joy through tears.

I am the daughter of retirees who are living in another occupied settlement. How does a daughter feel who does not know how her parents feel because there is no mobile connection for several days or it is very unstable. What does the daughter feel when she learns ex post facto that the home of her parents and brother was searched by the occupiers. What does a daughter feel when she realizes that she will not see her parents soon... God grant me to see them... It is good that there is at least an unstable mobile connection to hear at least a voice.

I am a cousin of a resident of Mariupol who saw the house in which she had an apartment burned, who was in the basement for more than twenty days, who walked for two days from Mariupol to Mangush (about 20 km) through a minefield, through a cemetery, and then to Berdiansk. She left behind elderly parents and a brother in Mariupol, about whose fate she knows nothing. What does the niece feel when she understands that her aunt and cousin could burn down in their apartment in the completely destroyed area of Mariupol.

I am the vice-rector of a higher education institution. The explosions, which heralded the outbreak of war, shattered ambitious short- and long-term plans. The educational process was interrupted. The normal operating mode is violated. “Calling students” has become a daily affair: who is where, who is connected. In addition, 43 students remained in the dormitory, including orphans, residents of Mariupol, Volnovakha, and those who have nowhere to go. The university family supports them daily, sharing cash, food, etc.

How does a manager feel in a situation of uncertainty? First, confusion, and then “turns on” responsibility, which helps to

coordinate actions, and plan work. Ahead is the temporary relocation of the university to the territory controlled by Ukraine, the resumption of the educational process, graduation, admission campaign...

With faith in victory  
I don't ask God "Why?"  
I understand one thing – this is our way.  
I'm sailing to a dream in a dream,  
And this dream is a free bird.  
A free bird is my Ukraine,  
You fought for freedom before.  
That insidious "Russian snake"  
She poisoned our peace and quiet.  
Ukraine is my soul,  
My heart aches for her.  
It is torn apart by war,  
But she is strong, stand up!  
We mourn the heroes...  
But candles do not go out in the dark...  
Many of them fell on the battlefield,  
But heroes don't die.  
I pray for victory  
I believe – a bright day will come.  
I know for sure (I pray to God),  
That everything will be Ukraine!

*April 10, 2022*

## **The war that changed everything**

**T**oday is another day of the war. Some people call it the war of liberation; others say it is the national conflict. But for me, it has become a personal war, because it is a fratricidal war.

I've got two brothers (they are my cousins and we grew up together). One of them is there on the front line, in Kharkiv, fighting for Ukraine's freedom, and his family. And the other one is somewhere on the Ukrainian steppe, as he has come from Russia to "save us from Nazis". But the bitter truth is that our family is huge, and all of us come from the Cherkasy region. The first brother grew up there, and the other one would come there with his parents every summer, so he knew quite well about the life and people here. Oh, brother! Whom did you come to kill? Us? Your relatives? There will be no answer from him, as well as from the other relatives from Russia and Transnistria. Though, they are not our relatives anymore, because family is supposed to always remember and support you, accept you for who you are. I know there are a lot of such "lost" families: brothers don't speak with sisters; mothers curse their children and disown them.

I think we have been fully rebooted; we have changed our value system. I am from Vinnytsia, and, thank God, our city can be considered quite quiet and peaceful. My everyday life is rather simple now: wake up, and make sure that my family and friends are alive. I do a roll-call with girls from different cities every morning: "Are you ok? Are you alive? Thank God and the Armed Forces of Ukraine!", then I start working. I begin each lesson by asking how

the students are doing and try to support everyone and set them up for the positive. Some children need psychological support, which they seek in private messages. I try to help and comfort them, although I am not a psychologist, but someone they know and trust.

After work and in my free time I volunteer. Many refugees drive through my city. Some of them need accommodation; others need clothes, food or medicine. Many refugee children need the most basic things: diapers, baby food, and even stationery. And yesterday I was looking for a wheelchair for an elderly woman and an apartment for another who could not leave her old dog at home in shattered Kharkiv.

In the evening it's time to hug my children, calm my baby, and explain to them what is happening and why. I also should ask the elder son how his day and training passed. Of course, I must call my parents to find out how they are doing and if they need anything.

This war is terrible. The fascists kill civilians and children; they destroy whole cities and villages. It hurts to watch these horrific videos with deaths and destructions. But I believe in Ukraine's victory! And I would like to finish this post with the words of Potap and Nastya Kamensky whose song "I am Ukraine" my baby is now listening to instead of a lullaby: "Ukrainians! It hurts more every day, but we will endure it all! We are strong! Only by keeping our spirit and heart together, we'll be able to do everything. We won't forget anyone who has gone to eternity these days! Let's hold on, no matter how hard it is. Today each of us is Ukraine!"



**Selected thoughts in seven parts**  
**(February 24 – March 15 2022)**

***T**houghts. Part one.*

Russia's ultimate goal (February 24 2022)

What does Russia want? To destroy Ukraine, to eliminate its sovereignty, and independence. Russia wants to kill the spirit of the Ukrainian people, and physically to eliminate all who disagree. At this point, this is basically the whole of Ukraine. And this physical elimination of the Ukrainians by the Russian army has already started.

What does Ukraine want? Ukraine wants to be an independent, democratic, European state. It wants peacefully to coexist with its neighbours. These two desires cannot coexist. Now, Ukraine represents all the democratic and free world. The Russian Federation, and its aggression represent the totalitarian world. The world where any attempt to disagree is met with torture, prison and death. For the West, this is the time to be completely united. Ukraine has to be helped not just with the promised sanctions but with the very serious military help. One has to understand very clearly: Putin is a new Hitler. If successful with occupying Ukraine, he will not stop there but will go further. His appetite to increase, the more successful his occupation will be. Putin is a dictator who understands only force. If Putin does not meet any serious, and forceful response from the West, that will be the end not only of the democratic Ukraine but, at least, of the free and democratic Europe.

Russia is not a democracy. It's a fascist and a totalitarian state. Ukraine is the genuine democracy. A democracy that was defending itself from the dictatorial attempts through all the time of Ukraine's Independence. And, by default, totalitarianisms and democracies cannot coexist. This war is not just the war for the territories. In its essence, this is the war for, and of the values: totalitarian values vs. democratic values. The wholesale war that Russia has just started represents not just the local "Russia-Ukraine" conflict. No, essentially, this is nothing but the Conflict of Civilizations: the totalitarian civilization vs. the democratic civilization. The Closed Society against the Open Society. Now, the democratic world cannot be mistaken, and should stop the military aggression of the pure evil that is coming from Russia as soon as possible. If the West abandons Ukraine, it can be the end not only of the democratic Ukraine, but it can be the end of the whole democratic world the way it is now.

Glory to Ukraine!

*Thoughts. Part two.*

Agony of the Russian Empire (February 25 2022)

We are watching the agony of the Russian Empire. The USSR (which wants to recreate Putin) is nothing more than the reincarnation of the Russian Empire. Putin, in his agony, is trying to drag us into oblivion with him. But Ukraine persists. Let's believe it!

*Thoughts Part three.*

A new Tatar-Mongol invasion (February 25 2022)

What Ukraine is experiencing now is simply some kind of new Tatar-Mongol invasion, with the new Khan Baty at the head. But this time, Kyiv and Ukraine-Rus will stand and will certainly defeat this entire Golden Horde onslaught. Russian warship, go f\*\*\* yourself

*Thoughts Part four (March 13 2022)*

Genocide in "online" mode

Putin's war against Ukraine is another attempt at genocide of the Ukrainian people. But unlike, say, the Holodomor, this is a genocide

that takes place literally before the eyes of the whole world. Genocide in online mode.

*Thoughts Part five (March 13 2022)*

Ukraine as the future cultural centre of Europe

Ukraine has every chance to become the real centrer of Europe. Not only its geographical centre (which, in principle, it is), but also a real European cultural centre. Ukraine as the “Place of Strength” of real Europe.

Not the one that, as now, is afraid of the Horde, and by all means and lies avoids a direct conflict with the latter. And the one who can always directly confront Horde leaders and prove her right both by force and by word. In principle, Ukraine is already doing this.

*Thoughts Part six (March 14 2022)*

Ukrainian democracy vs. Western democracy

Don't the last two weeks show that “Ukrainian democracy” has become, perhaps many times, stronger and more effective than the actual democracy of the “collective West”? However, there are real reasons to think so. If we take what is called the “pragmatic maxim” in philosophy as a “litmus test”, namely to test words with actions, then indeed, Ukraine is not just a liberal and democratic country only “in words”, but also in deed. Yes, every day, with their blood and their lives, Ukrainians en masse prove their loyalty to Western liberal values. In a matter of days, Ukraine turned into a solid democratic organism, a “democratic neural network”. When the “collective West”, which, as it were, should embody all those Western liberal values, for which Ukrainians pay with the most valuable – their lives – is somehow in no hurry to stand up for what should be its essence. “Collective West” has always criticized Ukraine (of course, often justifiably) for insufficient implementation of democratic reforms, corruption, etc. But now the question arises, does the “collective West” itself stand the pragmatic test of democracy and

liberal values? At the moment, this is the question, at least for the Ukrainians themselves.

*Thoughts Part Seven: I (March 15 2022)*

"Ukraine-as-"failed-state" = a psychological projection of Russia itself?"

Are there any scientific studies on the topic of Putin's accusations against Ukraine, such as Ukraine is a "failed state", "the Ukrainian people as such do not exist and never existed", "the Ukrainian government is Nazis and drug addicts", etc. nothing but a "psychological projection" of Russia itself? And in general, isn't the so-called "Russian Empire" the same failed state, that is, a country that actually "borrowed" the history of its neighbour, namely Rus, with its capital in Kyiv (a country that in historiography is called Kievan Rus/Ukraine – Rus/Ancient Rus)? Because exactly without Ukraine, in fact, there is no Russian Empire itself in principle. After all, didn't the graduates of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy create the very project of the empire?

And if we start the political history of Russia itself from the moment when it should be done, namely from the founding of Moscow by Prince of Kyiv, Yuri Dolgoruky in 1147, then it turns out that the political history of Russia itself is 700 years "poorer" than the political history of this country, which the Russian dictator calls a "failed state" for some reason. Since the state with the name "Russia" (and before that it was called "Moscow") appeared in 1721. But the name "Russia" itself is a Greek variant (Ῥωσία) of the name "Rus", i.e. the state whose centre existed precisely on the territory of modern Ukraine. Another variant of the Varangian "Rus" is the Latin "Ruthenia". This is what the lands of Ukraine were essentially called until the beginning of the 20th century (of course, together with the popular name "Ukraine"). That is, without Ukraine, the project of the Russian empire is nothing but a failed state. Well, there is no time to talk about real fascism/Nazism as the official ideology of modern

Russia (that is, “racism”). What is the new “swastika” worth, this “Z” symbol, with which the Horde invades Ukrainian lands?

In short, don't the Russians themselves have an inferiority complex; exactly that complex that they tried and still try to impose on us in every possible way? So, if this is so, then for the Russians themselves, this war is a chance to review the history of their own state. It is a chance to get rid of their own (but hidden) inferiority complex, which is actually rather one of the “engines” of Russian aggression against Ukraine (and it was such an engine of aggression and discrimination even before that). No matter how they opposed themselves as “Great Russians” to us “Little Russians”, no one dismissed the real meaning of these concepts: namely, that in the political sense, the “Great Russians” themselves come from the “Little Russians”, and not the other way around.

“Little Russia”/Ukraine = metropolis. “Great Rus”/Russia = a colony of the latter. Rewriting history when a colony “founds” a metropolis is sheer nonsense. Conclusion: the king is naked!

*Thoughts. Part seven: II. (March 15 2022)*

Hermeneutic problems or “Moscow Lost in Translation”.

Even from the very names “Ruthenia” and “Ῥωσία” it is possible (with certain reservations) to observe the conflict between the imaginary West and East, which we see as Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. I will explain. Both names refer to the term “Rus”: that is, medieval Ukraine (Kyiv Rus'/Rus-Ukraine/Ancient Rus). Ruthenia is the Latin name of (Kyiv) Rus', while Ῥωσία is its Greek variant. Therefore, different interpretations and, therefore, meanings follow from these names. To a certain extent, it can be said that the Latin Ruthenia means an orientation towards Western values – precisely those values that Ukraine is now protecting with its human shield, when the representatives of the so-called “collective West” themselves are sitting in a cozy cafe and drinking coffee with with a croissant, looking through his Instagram at the horrors that the Horde is doing in Ukraine.

Muscovy, having “borrowed” the name Ῥωσία in 1721, and having absorbed the Eastern absolutism of the Golden Horde from the very beginning of its existence, also distorted the democratic principles of the original, i.e., Kyivan Ῥωσία. That is, from the very beginning, the relationship between Ῥωσία with the capital in Moscow and Ῥωσία with the capital in Kyiv is purely nominal. It's just a name. But modern Russia sees the Muscovite (that is, absolutist) interpretation of Ῥωσία as the only possible interpretation of Kyivan Rus and, as a result, of Ukraine. But it is interesting that it is Ukraine, as the real Rus, that embodies this combination of the Latin West (Ruthenia) and the original Greek East (Ῥωσία). Democracy and tolerance are the essence of Ukraine as a state project. It is precisely this tolerance and democracy that the country, which until recently was called Muscovy (early XVIII century), and whose statehood is based on eastern absolutism, which is enshrined in the Roman allusion (“Moscow – the Third Rome”), cannot come to terms with it. So, it is the original democratic Kyiv interpretation of Ῥωσία that is a serious threat to the existence of the Moscow-Horde interpretation of Ῥωσία.

The great war for Ukrainian independence is also a war of interpretations of Russia, which dates back to the appearance of Muscovy itself on the world political map with its eternal encroachment on Russia. The time has come for victory and confirmation of the real, original, Kyiv interpretation of Russia. The time has come for the decline of Moscow Horde absolutism. But will Russia itself be able to reinterpret its misanthropic Muscovite (absolutist) interpretation of Ῥωσία, and eventually absorb the real Kyivan (Ukrainian) Ῥωσία/Ruthenia?

*Part 2. July 16–23 2022*

*IX. Life and death (July 16 2022)*

In one of my works, I am told that essentially we constitute the meaning of life as “possibility”, and the meaning of death as

“loss/death of possibilities”. It is the constitution of the meaning of death as “loss/death of opportunities”, in my opinion, that is the main reason for the existence of such a phenomenon as grief.

Observing the terrorist missile attacks carried out by the Russian Federation against peaceful Ukrainian cities, one can only guess how many human opportunities and potentials have been lost and crippled.

Whole worlds. Microcosms.

It was lost. Crippled

#RussiaIsATerroristState

*X. All Will Be Ukraine! (July 23 2022)*

It became pretty common among Ukrainians and among those who are friendly to Ukraine to greet each other with the expressions like “Slava Ukraini!” (Glory to Ukraine!) with its immediate follow-up “Heroiam Slava!” (Glory to Heroes!), and “Vse bude Ukraina!” (All will be Ukraine!) What is the meaning of “Ukraine” in these cases? Let’s take the first expression. *Prima facie*, in the “Slava Ukraini!” – “Heroiam Slava!” expression, the main objects of reference seem to be the very country, Ukraine, and the Ukrainian heroes who fought in the past and who are fighting now for Ukraine’s and the Ukrainian people’s existence. But when it comes to the second expression, “Vse bude Ukraina!” (All will be Ukraine!), such an interpretation seems not to be very applicable. For no Ukrainian wants Ukraine to conquer foreign countries or territories and to make them their own (Ukraine is not Russia). Hence, I think there is something more to the meaning of “Ukraine” in these cases than just a “country.” What is that? I think it will not be a mistake to interpret the meaning of “Ukraine” in both these cases as a conjunction of “freedom” and “dignity.” These values are quintessential for Ukraine as a country and Ukrainians as a nation. Because Ukrainians fight not just to exist but to exist with freedom and dignity, to be free and to live with dignity. It is the love of freedom

and a striving for dignity that constitutes Ukraine and the Ukrainians essentially. In this light, “Slava Ukraini!” – “Heroiam Slava!” can be interpreted as “Glory to Freedom and Dignity!” – “Glory to the Heroes Who Fought/Fight for Freedom and Dignity!”

“Vse bude Ukraina!” would mean “Freedom and Dignity Will Prevail!”

Therefore, it is freedom and dignity that are praised, it is freedom and dignity that are fought for, and it is freedom and dignity that are mostly desired.



## **Love bears all things and never ends**

**I**t is said that people and events come into our lives in order to change us, make us stronger and wiser, more patient and consistent, even more empathic and open to new and interesting issues... What about war? Does it have the same intentions? For the second time? Again? Haven't I learned this lesson before? God knows best, and I'm obediently searching for answers...

Spring 2014 has changed my life completely, as well as lives of my family. It was a challenge, which has never been completed. It was like a bright spice thrown to my plate by some guy, who was sitting at the next table, because I was laughing really loudly and happily. I don't know exactly what he threw, but that spice has changed my taste completely. Moreover, it's still staying with me, and nothing can break it. Even the aftertaste... I don't know how long will it take to live with repeated horrible dreams, where I am being arrested by my students again hiding themselves behind the gunners; eyes of my daughter, who lost her childhood and has become adult, even wiser and stronger than me; filled silence of my husband, who had to overcome hundreds of checkpoints, surgical operating rooms and wake up due to children's screaming; unspoken words that I have not managed to say to my mother and I'm suffocating due to this; my well-heeled and happy Ukrainian Donetsk, where I will never go back.

At that moment, during the spring and summer 2014, I thought that the occupants, who invaded my city and hung flags with

“chickens”, were a monstrosity, which could not last long. Rallies during the day were followed by crazy protests at night. My city woke up with yellow and blue ribbons and with flyers with our truth, 43 cars with Ukrainian flags were driving straight down the main square of the city for breakfast. Brut, Ukrainian national anthem, warm croissants, and strangers with guns all around... There was no fear, because we did not know what to be afraid of, since we were on our own land. On September 16, 2014, the Russians seized our university. The collaborators showed their faces, specially trained men from the FSB did not hide their stripes. The events during the last weeks of September in Donetsk are in a fog. Food baskets full of sweet and expensive alcohol, which have never been bought during a peacetime, morning delivery of insulin with cookies and milk; poor mobile network every other day and determination of the type of weapon and missile, which is flying towards your home, at the sound; words of gratitude – in fact, it was the last words – from students from Donetsk airport, i.e. from cyborgs, thanks to whom I’m still writing this letter; choice by love that cannot be mistaken for anything else, cannot be silenced or suspended. This is what God says in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient and kind, love does not envy or boast, endures all things, bears all things and NEVER ENDS” God is Love and Love for Ukraine is a condition, under which all the rest goes away.

Choice for love is a decision in favour of my homeland and my native University, subject to the existence of other offers I dreamt of before the war. October 5, 2014 is the starting date of my history in Vinnytsia. Donetsk National University was destined to be the first in a wave of relocation of universities, to move 750 km away from home and to be reborn in a new place. I was happy to be among the team that carried out this process – the group of staff and students, teachers and administrators. All of us were one family left homeless and without any means of subsistence, but with enormous an source

of creative and positive energy! Based on this energy we have managed to restore the University and trust in the “Donetsk people” in central Ukraine. Moreover, we have become a litmus test of patriotism. It is much easier to be a patriot far from the front line. It is not the same as singing the Ukrainian anthem standing in front of those, who are waving Russian flags and shouting at you: “get out of Donbas”. God's will brought me to Vinnytsia. Searching for answers is why am I here and why do things turn out like this. I am a Ukrainian with resoluteness from Donetsk and domestic bliss from Vinnytsia. My father was born here, and I was Christianized here when I was one. My roots are here as well. My mother is from Donetsk and my character was formed there. Ukraine is great in its diversity, namely, 130 ethnic groups and one heart that is frozen due to the sound of Ukrainian song. We would like to sing about European, peaceful and powerful Ukraine. However, such song haunts the minds of Russians. Our song is too brave and too loud for them. It must be frightening for Russia, and fear leads to making mistakes.

It is said that a feeling of error gives birth to monsters. It seems that Russians have realised their end. Thus, they are committing genocide on my land, destroying all that is alive and holy around. It becomes clearer that the existence of Ukraine and Russia within the limits of the future world order is impossible. Each day news feeds of the universities are full of pictures and photos of students, who will never pass exams again, and employees, who will not enter the classrooms again. More Angels each day... Ukraine is groaning in pain and powerlessness! At the same time, it is rising up and it is unbroken and undefeatable in the strength of its spirit and real deeds!

Lord, please stop the occupant! Where is that “Jack in the box” or that power that can turn them into sand and wash them away?

8 years – it is not a cycle, it is always 3, 7, 9, 11... 8 years of living in a war that has never been stopped. Since February 24, 2022 it has

become a full-scale genocide of the Ukrainian people, because the same subhuman at the next table decided that he knows better what I should eat or know or listen or believe in. How many more lessons of pain and failure, parting and anger attacks, tears of despair, happiness, pride and losses must pass us by, so the Russians can learn to love their own and respect what does not belong to them? We are mentally different and chose different paths a long time ago. There is no Putin's madness. This war is predictable from all sides:

1) We should have been born as a nation of free and conscious Ukrainians. As you know, value is born at the moment of loss or danger of losing everything, when the tinsel is vanishing and everything else becomes unnecessary. The only need is to live in our Motherland next to those, who are "brothers of the Cossack family".

2) Putin has always stated that the post-Soviet space (for him) is just a transformational form of "great Russia's" existence, which will free "subnations" from their megalomania of sovereignty. He has partly succeeded in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan by means of "special operations" under the slogan of liberty or exporting democracy. The people of these republics, along with the war in Ukraine, are also undergoing their formation, slowly and not so bravely, but there is time for everything. The fact of two months of large-scale war itself instead of a quick and successful special operation, means a failure of Russia, meanwhile the unbreakable spirit of the Ukrainians is a personal defeat for Putin with a global humiliation and war crimes against humanity for all subsequent generations of Russians.

3) The world's reaction is a step towards the formation of a new world order, which reveals the "greatness of Russia" in its inability to perform the full production cycle of any good (starting from diapers to planes). The import dependence of the Russian economy reaches 60 % and even more in several sectors (according to Russian experts themselves). If Europe and the U.S. continue to ignore the

Russian market for the sake of their own lives (without any fear that someone small and random from the next table will press the red button), Russians will have nothing to fly or drive within the next 3 years. They will eat their chintzy food and will begin to beg for joining the states with a higher level of development. No wheel – no driving! Back to tractors and singing wearing the “kokoshnik”! Any progressive product in Russia consists of imported components. They have never lived the European way. So do not get used to it! The occupant’s language will disappear in Russia itself because it's an Asian state. Thus, Chinese, or Japanese or maybe even Hungarian will be their rescue soon. When the world doesn't speak to you, you have to learn the language of those, who still will pick up the phone.

War cannot become the usual daily formula of life. Life must defeat Death, meanwhile Peace must defeat War. Neither neighbour can paint my world in his colours. It is impossible to denationalise something that is in my heart by any hot blooded action. Nowadays, the National Ukrainian Idea is being stamped with blood on the body of our nation.

It is said that people and events come into our lives in order to change us. The war has changed me irrevocably. I’m even more Ukrainian than I used to be, and I know the price of my freedom. I know the name of that neighbour, who uses spices for its supremacy, who sits quietly and whispering “for peace” or raise the wind to spread poison more widely, I know that it is impossible to overthrow Love, and Choice by Love. Love bears all things and never ends! With Ukraine in my heart.

*«Love has two colors: yellow and blue...»*

**“D**ear Universe! Here are two torn pages from the diary of an ordinary girl Anna, dated March 2014 and March 2022.

Donetsk. March 5, 2014. Lenin Square. The largest rally in support of Ukraine in the Ukrainian city under the national flag.

Symbolically, against the monument of Lenin, – a huge LED sign "Sberbank of Russia", whose shares are worth 1 cent today...

We were preparing for the rally, ordered yellow and blue balloons, on the way to the square turned on at full volume the song "I will not give up without a fight" by the legendary band "Okean Elzy". Smiling, happy and inspired by the love for Ukraine.

We are singing the national anthem of Ukraine, raising the largest flag of Ukraine in the world, that was fixed in the Book of Records, under which, as under the protection of the Mother of God, stood the Ukrainian Nation! This reminiscence makes our skin crawl from head to toe.

On the "other side" of the square – people with tricolors, "parebriki", who were brought by buses from Rostov and who threw eggs at us...

The police are there! It is full. It seems that they are protecting Russians with bats and eggs in the center of Ukrainian Donetsk from us, – Ukrainians, with balloons. The feeling of elation is replaced by a strange feeling of barely perceptible anxiety when you look into the eyes of people with the Russian flag.

Another sunny spring day... March 9, 2014. I walk downtown, and a yellow and blue ribbon flutters on the lapel of my jacket. I proudly take a step, then another, then one more. In front of me is

Ukrainian Donetsk. I feel its little tired but unbreakable breath in every cell! And it seems that spring will win!

Suddenly, I hear behind me: "Hey, girl! Run! Run fast!" I don't immediately understand why I must run. Hmm...I deliberately go slowly so that everyone who meets me on my way will notice my bright yellow and blue ribbon on my jacket! Because the bright yellow spring and the blue sky will win! However, I turn to the sound and see an enraged crowd with St. George's ribbons running towards me. Orange-black color gives the brain a signal of "danger" and the legs themselves begin to move faster and faster, run, with all my might! The only phrase in my head is "Why am I running? I am on my Ukrainian land..." So, I had to run and run away from the occupier, not stopping since that day...

Vinnytsia. February 24, 2022. The morning, which began with the words "It started..." And you, without further ado, understand exactly what. The first action is a call to my mother, and only then – documents, bug-out-bag, a cat in a carrier, a long way to work.

8 years... A figure that is mentioned today on social networks, accusing Ukrainians of silence about the events in the East. We were not silent! Indeed, Russia's war against Ukraine has been going on for 8 years, and our territories have been occupied for 8 years. The feeling of guilt still persists, phantom pain, the feeling of not being able to withstand...

However, every day from February 24, 2022, this feeling of guilt is replaced by the daily work of everyone on their front for the victory of Ukraine, the feeling of "fierce rage" against the Russian aggressor, the feeling that now is OUR time!

8 years ago, with balloons in our hands, we resisted the "Russian world" as best as we could!

And today, instead of balloons – army boots, armour, hand-woven camouflage nets, "cyber-troops", pies for the soldiers, queues to join the Territorial Defence Forces, round-the-clock police patrol of

yards with neighbours, car patrol, resettlement of displaced persons 2022 by displaced persons 2014, delivery of products for grandparents, 24/7 work of doctors, staff of shops and pharmacies, transfer of the last funds to charitable accounts, free food from restaurant owners and preparation of "cocktails" (you know which ones), information support by disseminating important data to all social networks (sometimes – very funny and uplifting), meeting the occupier's tanks with bare hands, text messages with the words "how are you?", that today are equal to "I love you and worry about you"... And of course, the most important superheroes that seemed to exist only in movies – our Armed Forces!

Today, love becomes an eternal engine for every Ukrainian! Comprehensive, bold, decisive... Love for Ukraine, Love that has today, instead of red, two colors: yellow and blue.

Thank you for your attention, Universe! Save us, because we will save You and keep love!"



**You can't hear your own bullet,  
but you can hear someone else's**

**T**his text was written to Russian colleagues on the third day of the war. They printed it out and laid it out on tables in cafes in the Russian capital. At the time I hoped that the Russians would hear me and take to the streets of Moscow against Putin. At the time, my faith in humanity still offered hope for stopping the war. At that time I did not know that there would be Mariupol, Bucha, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Izyum, Irpin, Borodyanka. A week later, Russian tanks will be standing in the yard of my house.

...Perhaps this text will be the last in this whole surreal story. No, I am not a pessimist. Just the character of a fairy tale Alice understandable only through the logic of the absurd, where there are metaphors, meanings and meaning portals. War hasn't a metaphor and I am not Alice. It is difficult to assemble first my fear, then my panic, then my anxiety, and then my despair into a single structural thought. And I don't want to rethink someone else's meanness. Let me put it another way.

I was born in Western Ukraine, but my native language is Russian. I adored literature classes in Russian-speaking school, was reading samizdat at university, and was reviewing Lungin's "The Island". I adored scholarly gatherings at the Russian State University of Humanities, fell in love with media philosophy at the University of St. Petersburg, published in journals and spoke at conferences at different Russian platforms. I respected my Russian colleagues and when they visited us in Ukraine, I would come to the station. I gave

them the keys to my apartment, shared food, money and ideas of my scientific hypotheses. They were “my people”. And I know that many still are of “my people”.

After the events of 2014, I started lecturing to my students in the Ukrainian language. Because language is important. Because I didn't want Russian-speaking people to come to protect me. I stopped speaking and publishing in scientific journals in Russia not for the reason that I was forbidden to do so, but because that it was my own choice.

But I loved listening to the writer Bykov, the sociologist Vakhshayn and Radio “Arzamas”. I understood that the information campaign with the mouths of the Solovyovs, Skabeevs, and Mikhalkovs was aimed at creating an image of a simulacrum state of Ukraine. It's like we are, but we don't really exist. And this had to be backed up by the regions of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk. Then it wasn't over. Our elections, presidents, politics were going through the discourse of war, which was being fought in eastern Ukraine. We understood that simply supporting with arms and military behind the so-called “people's” electors would not be enough for Putin. He dreamed of controlling all of Ukraine.

Therefore, despite the arrival in government of the KVN-team and non-professionals, whom my entourage criticized, our army continued to build up its level. Often against the support of the government. And the protest attitude towards Zelensky was a cold shower for him. He was turning from an actor into the president of the country. Three days can change a lot of things. Our political elite has purged itself of fugitives and diminished its ambitions. Our businesses have pulled out their financial cushions. And our president has become exactly OUR president. Because by giving guns to the people of Kiev he showed his trust in us. We began to distinguish the distance of a burst shell by its sound, to text more often, to say “Take care” and “I love you”.

It became clear from the first day of February 24, 2022, that Putin does NOT NEED THE COUNTRY he has despised. He DOES NEED US. A nation that has its own language and respects another. A nation where churches of different faiths quietly hold services in the same neighbourhood. A nation which didn't scatter, but went to defend its land. That is why shells fly not to strategic objects, but to houses, buses and hospitals. Today the whole country is at war. Rural houses and large cities are being shot. Kyiv, Sumy, Mykolayiv, Chernihiv. My hometown of Kharkiv. Already a hero city where most of the people speak Russian. We are being killed for being Ukrainians. A nation that according to Putin's logic should not exist.

I'm not afraid of being killed by Russian shells. I'm scared that God's Adam-Man experiment failed.

P. S. While I was writing this text, we prepared a basement for shelter from rockets, warm clothes for children, and neighbour Sasha taught us how not to panic when a bullet flies nearby. "You can't hear your own bullet, but you can hear someone else's". To this day I still don't understand the meaning of that phrase. Because I was not born for war.

## **“Russian world” and war through the eyes of an Orthodox priest**

**O**n February 24, 2022, at five in the morning, a full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine took place. The main reason was the European integration of Ukraine and its probable international status as a NATO bloc country. But, in order to justify this war of occupation in the eyes of Russian and even Ukrainian society, this so-called military operation was justified by the ideology of “Russian world” and declared “sacred” in the name of the unity of the triune people of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and the purification from the evil that came from the West, that is, from Europe, namely: LGBT propaganda, accusations of nationalism, violations of the rights of Russian-speaking and Orthodox Christians by the Moscow Patriarchate. And as independent sociological statistics show, 71 % of the Russian people support this war. The ideology of “Russian world” is essentially a heresy in the form of Orthodox ethnophyletic religious fundamentalism, totalitarian in nature, a false teaching that replaces the Gospel preaching and justifies the military invasion and all these violence and atrocities committed against the Ukrainian people by the Russian army. “The doctrine states that there is a transnational Russian sphere or civilization called Holy Rus, which includes Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (and sometimes Moldova and Kazakhstan), as well as ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking people around the world. It is believed that this “Russian world” has a common political centre (Moscow), a common spiritual centre (Kyiv as the “mother of all Russia”), a common language (Russian), a common church (the

Russian Orthodox Church), and a common patriarch (Patriarch of Moscow), who works in “symphony” with a joint president/national leader (Putin) to lead this Russian world, and to maintain a shared distinctive spirituality, morality and culture”. Over the past 20 years, the Moscow Patriarchate has emphasized this ideology from the pulpits of churches, which has become the reason that a large number of the episcopate, clergy and believers equate the “Russian world” with the Gospel and do not imagine a canonical existence outside of this ideology. The opponent of the "Russian world" is the secularized West, led by the United States and Western European nations, which is personified with apocalyptic evil and debauchery. The heretical theological distortion of the ideology of “Russian world”, according to Archimandrite Kirill Hovorun, consists in the fact that the Kingdom of God is replaced by Russian civilization, Christian love is replaced by traditional values that often contradict each other, the idol of the state is created instead of the Church, the personality of Jesus Christ is dissolved by the politics of the anointed king leader.

The roots of this ideology go back to the late 1990s. At that time, three political technologists – Petro Shchedrovtskyi, Serhii Gradirovskyi and Yukhym Ostrovskyi - constructed the concept of the "Russian world" as one of the solutions to the problem of the disintegrating post-Soviet environment. They proposed the language as a bridge that would connect independent post-Soviet states that diverged in different directions. Petro Shchedrovtskyi defined the “Russian world” as “a network structure of large and small communities that think and speak in Russian”. This concept was developed on the basis of earlier theories. Thus, Petro Shchedrovtskyi relied on the works of his father, Georgy Shchedrovtsky, who worked in the field of semiotics. According to the “linguistic turn” characteristic of analytical philosophy, Shchedrovtskyi Sr. believed that language is able to condition the thoughts and actions of its speakers. And Serhii Gradirovskyi admitted in one of the interviews that he was inspired by the works of the Russian historian and

philosopher Mykhailo Hefter. It is worth noting that both Shchedrovytskyi Sr. and Hefter developed their ideas in opposition to Soviet ideology. The trio of political technologists also intended to support the democratic scenario of Russia's development.

Thus, the "Russian world" project in its initial stage was not far from democracy. In the early 2000s, this concept evolved into something else that can be characterized as a neo-imperial project. At this stage, the Russian Orthodox Church was included in its further development. In addition to its cultural basis, the "Russian world" acquired another important ingredient – a religious one. Cultural and religious elements merged into what was defined as "Russian civilization". Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev) offered a society disillusioned with the ideology of communism the construct of "Russian world" in order to convert people to the Church and at the same time to fill the void of public space with the presence of the Church, but it happened that, on the contrary, the Church converted to secularized ideas, replacing theology with politics. The intention was to give the state a Christian ethos, but it turned out that the state got an ideology that it now uses as a weapon.

The genesis of the "Russian world" has its historical protoform, which has undergone three phases of development. The first phase begins in the 16th century and is associated with the monk Philofeus of Pskov, who created the theological and political concept "Moscow – the Third Rome", which envisaged the restoration of Orthodox civilization within the boundaries of a new empire, which was to be based on the foundations of Kyivan Rus. Therefore, in this phase, this ideology envisaged the restoration of the Russian state, but not with the centre in Kyiv, but with the new centre – Moscow. This is especially clearly visible during the reign of the Moscow Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible, who called himself the collector of the lands of Kyivan Rus. The second phase begins with the granting of autocephaly to the Moscow Metropolitanate in 1589 and its elevation to the rank of patriarchate in 1591. From this moment, the ideologeme "Moscow

– the Third Rome” begins to clearly predict the political restoration of the Byzantine Empire, as the successor of the first Roman Empire in the form of the Russian Empire. In Moscow, based on the example of the Byzantine rulers, the rite of anointing the king for leadership was established, but with a different sacred meaning. If in Byzantium and in the West, the monarch when anointed was likened to the kings of Israel, then in Russia the king was likened to Christ himself. The third phase is connected with the 19th century philosophical trend of Slavophilism, which opposed the ideology of Westerners, in particular Russian Orthodox Christianity, to Western Catholicism. They formed the ideology of “Panslavism” – the concept of cultural, linguistic, political and religious grouping of Slavs. After the revolution of 1917, this ideology came to an end and was replaced by a new communist propaganda. According to Mykola Berdyaev, socialism played the role of a religion that supplanted God and threatened the human personality. And only after the collapse of the USSR, a new construct “Russian world” was created, which, on the one hand, restored the aspirations of the previous ideology with a combination of the ideas of the Soviet Union, on the other hand. “Russian world” is a hybrid between the teachings of the Church and communist ideology.

The uniqueness of this war in Ukraine is that the whole world sees the reality of hostilities, if earlier during wars the world could only imagine what was happening on the front, now, with the help of the Internet and gadgets, the world sees videos and pictures every day all the atrocities of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The tragedy of this war, unlike other wars, is that the believers of the same Church kill each other, the Orthodox kill each other, if there were religious wars in Europe, then Catholics mainly fought with Protestants. The war divided time for Ukrainians into “before” and “after”, posed new challenges not only to the state, but also to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. A very important and difficult test for the Church was the question of how to carry out its service in the front territory, where battles are fought every day, where even the temple has

already been destroyed. How and should the statutory temple service be performed? Practice showed that the first priority for the priest, after sending his wife and children to a safe place, was to stay with his parishioners who could not evacuate from the war zones either because of old age or because of the lack of locomotor health, or simply did not have time, and deliver them water and food. After all, life in the front zones is spent exclusively in basements and bomb shelters, where there is no electricity, heat, food and medicine.

Some priests even tried to perform the Liturgy in the subway, basements, as long as there were enough prosphora or bread and wine, and when they ran out and there was nothing to serve the Eucharist, the priest's task remained to perform the service of love. From eyewitness accounts, the very presence of the priest with people who found themselves in inhumane conditions inspired them to tears of gratitude and did not allow them to lose faith in goodness and sacrifice. This is the true ministry of the good shepherd. Of course, not all priests behaved like that, many left, no one condemns anyone, after all, those who evacuated went on the path of volunteer service. And this is the next challenge that the Church faced during the war – this is the organization of buses for the evacuation of people from the front areas, and the rearrangement of church premises into temporary shelters. The collection of humanitarian aid for refugees and for servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was very active. The Church opened a new experience for itself when the clergy signed up for civil territorial defense and performed all the necessary duties and work for the protection of state borders without taking up arms. It should be noted that Christians of various denominations and traditions united around the war, not only in Ukraine, but throughout the world. Opening the borders of other states to grant protection was especially important for Ukrainian refugees.

In connection with Russia's war of occupation against Ukraine, the question of the autocephalous status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church radically arose. After all, being self-governing in intra-



church life, she belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. When Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev) blessed and prayerfully supported the war and the killing of civilians in Ukraine, the destruction of cities and economic infrastructure, it became clear to the majority of the clergy and believers that it was no longer possible to exist in unity with the Moscow Patriarchate. The search for ways of canonical separation and gaining independence began. At the moment, there are several options: the first is to convene a local council, make a decision on autocephaly and send it to the Moscow Patriarch Kirill for approval. Which is unlikely. The second is to unite with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which is not yet recognized by the Orthodox world, only four local churches out of fourteen. The third option is to send the adopted decision of the local council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on autocephaly to all fourteen local churches for recognition. At the moment, the path is not defined and the leadership of the Church is in the search and understanding of further post-war existence.

The war in Ukraine became a stumbling block among the clergy and believers in understanding it as God's permission. Priests faced the problem that many people equated compliance with the will of God, put an equal sign, which of course is not correct. It was necessary to specially prepare and deliver sermons on this topic and present arguments based on the Holy Scriptures, Church fathers and modern theologians and prove that concession is diametrically opposed to the Lord's will. For example, David Bentley Hart in his book "Gates of the Sea" writes: "God wants His creation to be united with Him in perfect union in intelligent free love. And therefore God can allow what contradicts His wishes in the name of preserving the free will of His creation". Having taken for analysis various places from the Bible, for example, the story of the long-suffering Job, the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs, the beating of innocent babies by Herod, the illness of the Apostle Paul, we can draw the following conclusion that there is no template for understanding all trials and

misfortunes in this world. The only thing we can say is that the fallen world has absurdity and meaninglessness, which are connected with sinfulness, that is why the Son of God came to correct this absurdity and meaninglessness and fill it with new meaning with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We know with certainty that the suffering and tears of our soldiers, civilians and innocent Ukrainian children will be wiped away and they will gain comfort from the Savior's love. Also, the ability to separate from the Moscow Patriarchate and fully live an independent life became a problem for believers. Such a break was perceived as a schism, even if recognized by other local churches. The essence of the Church was identified with the governing structure in people's minds. What discredits the doctrine of ecclesiology. So, we see how the ideology of "Russian world" distorts not only the spiritual reality, but also the reality of what is happening. Because Russian television covered and showed not a real picture of reality, but one that was manipulated to meet the demands of propaganda. Truth was distorted by lies, black was called white, and white was called black.

Conclusion: modern Russian military aggression against Ukraine is a stage of value aggression against Western civilization, the tactical goal of which is to obtain a certain revenge for the destruction of the USSR. The strategic goal is aimed at changing the world order according to the rules defined by Russia. The presence of a deep mental background, the fanatical faith of Russian society in the renewed Soviet myth indicate that hopes for an "automatic" solution to the problem of V. Putin's removal from power are overstated. There must be changes in the church environment first of all, conversion to the Gospel and condemnation of fundamentalist ideologies, whether political or religious, of any kind, if they distort the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. The "Russian world" must be condemned so that it will not be returned to in the future, the names of the criminals and the repentance of the guilty must be named. Further, there should be changes in society and the state structure, overcoming the oligarchy, corruption, and rethinking the value of the human personality.

## **A Letter from Ukraine “With hope in the heart”**

**F**ebruary 23

I discussed with my colleagues from Sumy State University the issue of the scientific internship of my colleague at the Department of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy of Kherson State University. We agreed, outlined some details, and happily told my colleague that it remained to agree on some minor touches on February 24 at 10.00. And said that she could, in principle, already be starting a scientific internship in Sumy.

These were my plans and the plans of my colleague...

**February 24. It is 4.30 am**

I woke up from a distant explosion and a feeling of terrible eerie despair listening to any noise. I could no longer think of sleep. I opened the phone and began to subconsciously seek confirmation of something I did not yet understand. And I found... in one of the Viber groups, I found a video of two young guys shooting an amateur video of an explosion in Nova Kakhovka near the Kakhovka Reservoir at 4.30. They were scared and happy, at that time they still did not understand the full scale of the tragedy...

At 6 o'clock in the morning, central television (usually, I watch 1+1) announced the beginning of the war with Russia. Heart and mind refused to believe in it and accept it as reality. From that moment on, time began to exist differently, as if it had stopped. Day and night have become one starting point from which there is no gate. My usual normal world disappeared... everything I did, what I aspired to, what I considered the main and very valuable disappeared

in complete darkness. I hardly remember the first day of the war... I did some chaotic things, packed my first suitcase in which, when I disassembled it later, it was full of unnecessary junk that was useless, such as holiday clothes, high-heeled shoes... I called my relatives, tried to agree on what to do next, and meanwhile, a dark horde from the Crimean peninsula was approaching my hometown of Kherson. At that time, none of us understood how many of them were approaching. The city was flooded with cars, some were leaving the city, and others were circling as if they had lost their life... My husband and I travelled around the city, met with my sister, and mother, and tried to make some chaotic purchases: medicine, food, detergents... why??? This is probably how chaos looks.

Being under occupation for 40 days then, I kept coming back to the first day why I didn't leave, as my acquaintances and friends did. Perhaps, I believed to the last that this is a terrible dream and it should end soon and my usual life will come in which I know everything and understand what I want. It did not happen as expected.

My native and beautiful city of Kherson has been under occupation since the first day... because the orcs came across the Antonivskyi Bridge on the bypass road. Our terrorist defence tried to stop them, but the forces were not equal. I am not a military expert or a "couch" general, I will not develop the topic of "betrayal", but many incomprehensible things happened in the first days of the war. There will be a time of peace and everything will fall into place. "Heroes" will be found. In any case, our defenders, who performed the task of keeping Antonivskyi Bridge to the last, fulfilled it with the value of their lives. Then much more will be "worth your life". But for the first it is always harder. After reading and analyzing a lot, I realized that this gave the opportunity to prepare for Mykolayiv, Odesa for defence.

The first ten days passed like one day in the afternoon... – foggy mind, confusion, fear, explosions, broken buildings, the first deaths

of civilians... prayers, tears, early roll-call "How are you?" I was trying to gather my relatives and neighbours in my house. During the first days of the war in my house there were 8 people, two cats and a dog)))) I still have the need for all to be within my sight and preferably in the same room. When there were shooting hailstorms, we all learned, even my four-year-old niece, to distinguish the attacks from the quiet times. For 40 days we had been sleeping in clothes, in the clothes we used to wear when walking... We had a cellar in the house and when the shelling started we immediately ran to the basement... It felt surreal that children were sleeping in the basement because of constant air raid sirens, and all of these took place in the 21st century. It is hard to understand and accept that in the age of new nanotechnology, IT technologies and human progress children sleep in a cold basement.

Some time after here comes the realization that we are tired of being afraid. Since now your only wish is to go out into the street, come back to your working place (I still remember the workplace, the documents and flowers left there) and find food. Yes, I mention finding food, because the trucks with provisions were not allowed into the city, food warehouses were located outside the city... Orcs' checkpoints did not let cars go through the town. That is why all the city is filled with queues: for food, for liquids, for bread, for palm oil. Queues stretching for kilometres... Every day started with the search for food... In social networks there are lots of groups where information about those who sell products, the price, exchange of bottles, the price is shared. People joined the line at 6 a.m. in order to bring something home before dinner. We learned how to save food for later, cook as much as we can eat, eat bread till the last crunch. Not to mention the prices. There is a slogan "To whom war, to whom mother is native". The war exposed all the people. It showed their true faces. There are those who since day one have been helping people with medical supplies, food, or those who self-organized into volunteer centres to help vulnerable groups, hospitals, hospices,

boarding schools, etc. But unfortunately there are some who appeared to take huge price markups on everything: food, clothes, fabrics. People who are still unable to resume working are lacking money. this problem is growing, because there is no work at all. But buying food for their children and relatives is still the number one issue.

But my city remains unbreakable since the first phase of adaptation to the new realities of life. The citizens came out to the central square of the city – Liberty Square, to show what feel about the occupants. Probably someone misinformed them that they would be greeted with flowers but they were wrong with their hopes. Every day the civilians come out for peaceful protest since the first days of occupation and until today, the 51st day of the war. They are in big danger because of the occupants taking photos and video recordings of activists and people showing up at the protests in order to check them later, looking for them in social networks... Some of them are sent home, the information about others is missing... On the 41st day of the occupation, the Russian Federation's garbage was displayed on the central square of the city... it is impossible to look at it calmly and accept it. Some unknown people, probably all brought-in “actors” from Crimea, a lot of them were brought to our city and disrespected the memorial to the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, it is from orcish powerlessness. For the occupants it is a shock, they have cognitive dissonance, they have a reality gap as ordinary people are not paid, self-organized, they go to the Ural vehicles and shoot at an APC with the flag of Ukraine. When they are shooting, throwing noise grenades and releasing slosocyanine gas, people do not disperse, but more often stand one to one and hold the line... I saw such fear in their eyes, I have no words to convey it to you! Kherson was the first to come out to meet the occupiers, then this initiative was followed by Gola Pristan, Genichesk, Chaplynka, Chongar, Bilozerska, Oleshki and hundreds of small villages and territorial communities. It was not expected for the guerrillas; they felt psychologically disrupted. Later I found

informational confirmation of this impression, the leadership of the occupiers in Kherson region was replaced due to their unstable psychological state. The new ones who replaced the former occupants became more cruel and cynical to the civilian population. Now all the rallies in Kherson can be considered the value of their lives!!! But the people of Kherson don't mind the trouble and continue to gather and show the whole world that Kherson is Ukraine!!! I am proud of my city and the brave citizens of Kherson. Every day the orcs drive their zetches<sup>71</sup> set chaotic checkpoints, check documents, look for something or someone, take away cars from the residents... They break down doors in buildings and civilian apartments, take members of their families with them, deputies, activists and community activists. They conduct searches of soldiers, law enforcers, and members of their families... I have a question from the first days of the war: where do they get the lists and addresses of their residence?.. But it remains a rhetorical question.

Nerves become exposed, sticky fear goes into my heart and cold tentacles grip my brain... thinking and accepting reality becomes more and more difficult.

I spent 40 days of war with my family under the occupation. I stayed in town and continues living under the occupation... I, my mother, my sister and my 10 and 4 years old nieces escaped from the city by steppes and fields, steppes, wooded roads with a guide. So if I were asked to tell the way I could not show this difficult path on the map... We passed eight block-posts of the occupants: from ostentatiously very thoughtful to drunken; from servicemen to some cops (who were asking for tea and cigarettes); from Russians to Caucasians; from the older to very young orcs we met on this road. When I left Kherson it seemed that I would finally find my peace, but it was self-deception because my boyfriend, my house, my life,

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<sup>71</sup> Z (military symbol) – is one of several symbols painted on military vehicles of the Russian Armed Forces involved in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

my family photo albums, my friends, my work, my past... remained at home. I have lost my vision of the future, my hope. My heart is broken, my soul is wounded. I consist of thousand of puzzles that I am trying not to lose and put together... Every day begins with the phrase: How are you? Every day there is a fear if only there was mobile or internet connection... I always keep the phone in my hand... and scrolling news, news, news in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening....

Now I am in a safe place together with my daughter and my mother. It feels completely split up: physically my body is in a safe place, and mentally I still remain at home in Kherson together with my husband of 26 years, the friend of my life, whom I gave my promise to be both in joy and in grief, in health and in illness... It turns out that I betrayed this promise...

How could it happen in today's democratic world that some illiterate person can use his sick fantasies about “denazification” and “demilitarization” towards other people, without using the term of war by its name, but a “special operation” instead, cause so much pain and grief, bring death to our children, civilians, our defenders? Again, this is a rhetorical question. But I have learned my history lesson. I graduated from the Ukrainian school, in my peaceful life I spoke mostly Russian... now I speak exclusively Ukrainian both in my life, in my writing, in my thoughts. “Asvaboditilie – asvabodilie” in Russian. This is my personal PEREMOGA<sup>72</sup>!!!!

They say there is no future without the past... so going into future within faith in the better! To the victory!!!

Hero City Kherson

City of Hope Krakiv

*April 15, 2022*

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<sup>72</sup> Victory.



**24.02**

**W**ho will come to us with denazification and die from denazification.

For some reason, I remembered my childhood prayers: if there is a war, let them bomb at night when I sleep.

I wonder if the Lord wrote them down somewhere as the most important request of a five-year-old girl.

**25.02**

#to\_remember

Changed clothes, made dressings, blood pressure is excellent 162/80, pulse 50. Picked up, sat down, taking a photo with mom. I am glad that she already has such a stage of dementia that she does not understand that there is another war, she will be 92 on April 13th.

**25.02**

#to\_remember

I feed my mother and talk about everything, and suddenly she tells me: daughter, I don't have a coat to go outside. What a complex and delicate psyche of demented people, despite the fact that I didn't say a word to her about what was going on in the country, but it turns out that she can distinguish the sound of salutes from the sound of bombs.

**25.02**

And I didn't tell you that I couldn't stand the sound of airplanes since I was a child. It's from that preschool, when we used to stare at each other in kindergarten. I'm 50 years in anticipation of the low after the high sound.

**26.02**

#to\_remember

In our Gostomel bomb shelter on 24.02.22 our first girl was born, the continuation of our Ukrainian family, greetings to the father and health for the whole life.

**26.02**

#to\_remember

Dear friends, make hashtags and record your own war chronicles. These are all documents. Love-kiss, we are invincible.

**27.02**

#to\_remember

When the oil depot was blown up, I just taped the windows around the perimeter as best I could everyone who is in the disaster zone: maximum humidification of the room, isolate the gaps around the perimeter of the windows as much as possible. Drink up to 2–3 litres of salted water. If there is sour milk, use it without fail. Diluted milk, any absorbent materials. Use masks, moisturizer masks. Turn on air conditioners and humidifiers. My mother does not recognize me, I hope that this is temporary and she will be released by the morning.

**27.02**

#to\_remember

special post for Russians I gave birth to you, I will kill you.

Taras Bulba N.V. Gogol

#to\_remember

Yesterday, I had time to cut the hydrangeas in the garden before the curfew and will take a photo. Last year's liverwort, which was the most valuable there, was planted for my mother's crops, and she thought that if it took root, then my mother would live until spring.

**27.02**

#to\_remember

I'm so lucky that I never had relatives in Russia and I don't need to have endless conversations with zombies. All my conversations with relatives ended in Bialowieza Forest in 1991.

**28.02**

#to\_remember

No one can break this people: as soon as the curfew was lifted, our janitor Nadya came to work in a red vest with our yard dog.

**28.02**

#to\_remember

Karamzin is spinning in his grave now, as if on a grill. He tried, created a history of the orcs from 12 volumes, all that remained was to memorize one sentence “Kyiv – the mother of Russian cities”. No, they tried to break the fifth commandment.

**2.03**

#to\_remember

I calmed down a little and am doing the revision. I expected that the bread is tight, and I will give the yeast tomorrow, because there is very little flour in the house, thank you, and the volunteers bake bread for at least 53 g of dry yeast. And here I find my stash: Zhydobanders are invincible, I have a pack of Passover matzah. The sponsor of my prayer today about “our daily bread” was the Vaad of Ukraine and Yakov Dova Blaich.

Already baking who knows how to bake bread from alcohol yeast. They ask you are incredible, they are already baking this bread somewhere under the breweries for those who remained in the village. We are invincible.

**2.03**

#to\_remember

The butchers thought that Irpin was a resort town. Yes, drink some water, take quartz and breathe in the pine forest and scare the villagers about the mighty and great. Mother's bayuns. I am generally silent about Bucha – learn the language, whore. Gostomel has been standing here since 1494 and is still standing for as long. It has Magdeburg law since 1614.

#### 4.03

#to\_remember

Cousin Natashka from Zaporizhzhia called at 19:24 to say goodbye, she said that the bitches had come to the NPP. It's good that Aunt Vera died on November 21. They waited a long time for their grandson, now he is 4 years old. Out of shock, I forgot my daughter's name – Anya, like my grandmother. We survived Chernobyl, we will stand, who are the Europeans, let's suppress our leaders, because the disaster will not only be here, the atom knows no borders.

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**Tetyana Oriekhova, Hanna Sereda, Inga Sivytska**

*Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University, Vinnitsa*

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**How the Ukrainian nation is being hardened:  
the University students' and faculty's perception of war**

**O**n February 24, 2022, at 4.30 am, without declaring war, Russia attacked our country – a full-scale invasion of Russian troops on our territory started. For most of my fellow teachers at Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University, the war actually began in 2014. How do those who for the second time received a “fraternal” blow from the “Russian world” feel? How do Ukrainian youngsters perceive Russian aggression? How is the Ukrainian nation being hardened in this war? Here is our story that runs about these and other things in the interview format with students and teachers of Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University.

***Tetyana Oriekhova:** How did you learn about the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022?*

***Inha Syvytska:*** For sure this day will be remembered forever. I woke up to the sound of a balcony door – a very typical sound, which I did not forget after the heavy artillery shelling in Donetsk. I just had a second to ask myself “What the hell is going on?” I glanced at my phone (it was silent), and saw my daughter’s tenth call from Kyiv: “Mom, are you alive?? War!! We are being bombed!!”

The first emotion is a feeling of unreality. Impossible! In the 21st century, in the heart of Europe, the cities of an independent peaceful country being shelled?!?... And then I thought: “It has begun”. Surprisingly, on the first day I was relatively calm, I still could not believe that this was a full-scale war, not a “one-time action” – an intimidation element of the Ukrainian authorities to negotiate

recognition of the independence of CDDLO (Certain Districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of Ukraine), (*ORDLO – Ukr.*).

*Hanna Sereda:* The morning of February 24 started as usual – I woke up at 6.30 and started waking my daughter to school. And only at 7:04 the question of a mother rang in the parent's chat like an alarming bell: “Good morning! What is the situation with schools like? ” I was surprised, so I opened the news feed – and was terribly horrified: it ran about Putin's night speech and air strikes on cities in the north and east of the country. And although the class teacher had replied that we were going to work as usual, most parents wrote off that the child would stay home. And already at about 8 am we heard explosions near Vinnytsia. They reported one killed and 24 wounded as a result of missile strikes by Russia. It is so difficult to describe this shock and the instantaneous loss of a security sense, when a heavy stone falls on the heart of fear for children, parents, friends, country, future... I immediately heard a call from my eldest daughter, who studies and lives in another city – with her grandparents. No wonder they say that the first call in such times will be from the dearest person – so it was with all Ukrainians. My daughter begged me to pack up and go to the western region where she was staying at the moment. After hard reflections, conversations with relatives, colleagues, constant monitoring of disappointing news about numerous tanks with strange Z-marks, which were moving across Ukrainian villages and cities in a relentless stream, I made up my mind to leave the city.

There was a full scope of emotions I experienced – from shock (is it real?), fear, despair, confusion, and then again fear, which tightly gripped the heart and did not allow to breathe to the fullest, and then forced me chaotically to pack my stuff, and to convince my relatives of the decision to get extremely angry against the Russians. At first I was kind of offended by my Russian relatives, with whom we had been arguing for 8 years after the first invasion of Donbas. I had been trying to persuade them in the opposite views but we still

did not understand each other, and then we decided not to raise and just avoid those painful topics in our conversations. On the eve of the invasion, my Russian aunt posted on her Facebook profile the video interviews arranged by Russian media on the streets of Donetsk about how happy the so called DPR and LPR residents were with their recognition of Russia and the beginning of that so called “special operation to protect them”.

I then wrote in the comments: “It is too early for you to rejoice”. And on February 24 I wrote to her in Viber about the beginning of the war, about the explosions near Vinnytsia, about the first victims, and in response I heard that it was a fake and that “our people are not fighting there, but only liberating the DPR and LPR”. And then there was a post from the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation that the Russian troops did not inflict missile, air or artillery strikes on the cities of Ukraine. I asked, “Do you trust them more than me, your niece?” And I heard that she did not believe me at all “in terms of politics” and my beliefs “had suffered greatly over the past eight years”. And then I heard that they were being shot near Belgorod, and all my arguments about the missiles hitting Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lutsk and even Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv were not accepted by my aunt, with whom I spent my summer vacation at my grandmother’s in a village in the Donetsk region... I learnt from my aunt how to cook well, how to collect medicinal herbs, how to help with the household... “Ukraine does deserve this” – those were my aunt’s words... That is, we “deserved” all these bombings, because “they were silent when they bombed Donetsk and Elenovka”, because “according to satellites and news, they know who shot at whom”. I do know that almost all my acquaintances who have got their relatives in Russia have experienced the similar emotions.

Sometimes some Russians dare to call their relatives in order to ask “how are you there in Ukraine?”, but this is more the exception rather than the rule. Most relatives from Russia are either indifferent or scared. It is hard to believe that they are ashamed of their

government actions. Even when Russian relatives find the strength and courage to listen to their relatives in Ukraine, they blame the war for their ease and ferocity in curses on Bandera, the Nazi, the Americans, and the rest of the clichés disseminated on Russian television. And one can never convince them, and, in my opinion, one as well shouldn't waste their mental energy on people who are ready to kill them due to the slogans they hear on TV.

**Olha Bezpiatko:** It was night time. I woke up to a strange sharp sound, feeling panic. I listened to everything... And suddenly a loud explosion occurred, followed by shock. I immediately informed my friends and my family of what had happened. Explosions became more frequent. At that time, there were already messages on the phone about explosions all over Ukraine. I panicked, reading the news each and every single minute and beginning to understand that it was a military invasion. It was already morning, the situation was becoming quite tense. People were queuing for ATMs, and the connection on the phone was lost. The situation got clear. In fact, the first thing that happened was a sense of confusion. It was intertwined with panic and fear. Especially when I learned that similar actions took place in many cities of our country. My hands began to tremble and the tears rolled down my cheeks. These feelings are probably understandable, because the situation was unpredictable. My friends tried to reassure me, but the very understanding of the events caused moral pain.

**Oleksandra Vasyk:** In the first days, of course, we all felt terrible fear, because we were told everywhere that we would be captured within 3 days, and that Ukraine would not exist as a state, that Russia would be in Lviv in a few days, and that a nuclear war would break out. But after almost 5–6 days the situation began to stabilize: Ukrainians got united, we began to believe in our armed forces, we began to believe in our victory and the fear of Russian aggression gradually faded. Now I seldom react so sharply to such fakes as those in the first days, I have learned to analyze the information



received and even ridicule the attempts of Russian propagandists to intimidate us.

**Tetyana Oriekhova:** *In your opinion, why did the Russian Federation attack Ukraine? What were their motives?*

**Inha Syvytska:** I have been thinking a lot about Putin's motives these days. I'm sure he made the decision to invade, on his own. There are different versions to consider. But the main thing here is banal revenge. The revenge on the Ukrainian people from the small notorious personality who had been subjected to domestic violence since his childhood and built his life based on total adaptation and lies. The revenge for our love of freedom, independence, for the love of our history and language, for the fact that we can elect, control, even quarrel (both from high tribunes and in the streets) our President. The revenge from the man who holds in fear  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the globe, for the fact that the inhabitants of the neighbouring small proud country have given up the "brotherly embrace", and most importantly, can be a model to follow in Russia. All of Putin's other speeches about nazism, biological weapons, and threats from NATO are, as we say, total "crap".

**Hanna Sereda:** My thoughts on this have been constantly changing. At first, I thought that Russia was doing this in order to create a buffer zone between Ukraine's own borders and the borders of NATO countries. But within time and the revelation of horrific evidence related to killing the civilians, as well as comparison of their previous purchases of mobile crematoria, 45,000 bags for the disposal of bodies, their goal does become obvious, which is the destruction of Ukrainians as a nation, intimidation and ruining of our sovereignty and statehood. And, if we recall the whole frankly bloody, famine, cultural history of our relations with the northern neighbour – the goal still remains the same – this is namely the conquest of Ukraine, the destruction of its democracy, national identity, unchanging imperial ambitions and aspirations with "we should all be afraid" for other countries to be blackmailed, seeking

favourable conditions for trade in their raw materials, and dreams of building the idea of a “bipolar world”. In the latter, they have indeed succeeded as the world, indeed, as the UN Security Council vote shows, is divided into two parts – democratic civilized countries and directly dictatorial.

**Yuliia Dovhaliuk:** I know the history very well, and I know that this is not Putin's war – it was inevitable due to the historical imperial attacks of our neighbours, regardless of their “ruler”. Remembering the times of the Empire and the Soviet Union is a complete destruction of Ukrainian identity. This country has always had encroachments on foreign territories, as these wars divert attention from their domestic problems. In fact they can not recognize that Ukraine is not Russia. In their understanding, we have no right to live better, because for them we have always been a raw material appendage. In my opinion, it will take too long for one to list the reasons why the war has started. But the main thing here is that the existence of the strong Ukrainian nation is too much for Russians.

**Tetyana Oriekhova:** *For you the war began in 2014. What are the feelings of people who are again in direct danger of their lives, the lives of their loved ones, the threat of losing such a fragile state of return, at least conditionally, to a normal life?*

**Hanna Sereda:** As an educated person, I immediately understood that surely there would be no peace with the advent of the “Russian peace”. Moreover, I had no illusions about a possible peaceful life in the region occupied by the armed bandits. Therefore, in the first days of the Donetsk to have been occupied, I sent my children and their mother to my relatives in Western Ukraine, and then a month later, as soon as I went on vacation, I relocated myself as well. Of course, like all my friends-migrants, we had hoped to leave for 2–3 weeks just to wait until the liberation of our hometowns. It was hard to believe then in the possibility of a long frozen conflict. I didn't even take our cat with me as I had agreed with my neighbour to take care of the pet. Already in the autumn I went on difficult long

paths to pick up warm things and valuable memories of our lives – photos, books – so to say to put our lives in suitcases.

Then, while packing, I spent three sleepless nights of constant bombing of Donetsk airport, when the Russians fired straight from our neighborhood, and 8 km away at the airport I heard heavy bombs and shells falling on our cyborg soldiers, who bravely defended the airport for more than six months. This feeling of horror and pain for our guys is back now, when we have been helplessly watching the siege and bombing of Mariupol for more than a month and a half...

I still do not understand the people who do not leave the scene of hostilities. One should not expect mercy from non-humans who have come to destroy people, cities, villages, culture, and their freedom. And secondly, I do believe that our military men should not be prevented from doing their job in order to liberate our towns and villages from the occupiers, because civilians become hostages of these occupiers as our military men do value citizens but the occupiers – not at all. Therefore, my first days of the war were filled with the conviction of people close to me to leave the cities that were in danger of capture. And, frankly speaking, these beliefs were effective for my confused friends and colleagues. And every news that someone was able to leave the dangerous area gave me the opportunity to start breathing again.

I remember writing to my former colleague, who lives in Kherson and did not have time to leave, and providing her with brief instructions on where to hide in an apartment during artillery shelling, which I knew well enough from my Donetsk compatriots' experience. And then the next morning the colleague reported that her family had come under heavy fire from more than 30 volleys, "threshing machine" as she put it – a shell hit her apartment through the ceiling, smashed the central heating battery, and they miraculously escaped in the hallway, holding their cats in their hands, though her grandmother was a little shaken. Therefore, our

sad experience, as well as the experience of how the pseudo-people's republics were created, was useful to many Ukrainians. I gave another colleague of mine the opportunity to stay in my apartment in Vinnytsia. They left Kyiv as confused and scared as we were on the first day. They stayed with me for a couple of weeks and then moved on to the west. Then my sister's families from Mykolayiv and then her friends as well stayed in my apartment on the way to the shelter. Now my godmother's family from Kyiv are living there.

I do remember the long 30 days of waiting for the departure of my relatives from Mariupol, when communication with them was cut off and I had to search for familiar names on all possible bases of evacuees, chatbots searching for the missing, text messages to the messenger pages they last visited on March 2, top up their phone accounts in order to give them the opportunity to call. And at the same time I was reading horrible messages about the destruction, death, hunger and thirst, continuous bombing. Therefore, every night I comforted myself with fervent prayers, because there was nothing more I could do to help.

**Inha Syvytska:** In fact, after February 24, I was hoping that the war, which began in 2014, had finally entered its final stage. And strangely enough, this is what gives me the strength to hold on. I believe that this is the final battle for Ukraine's independence and the return of Donbass and Luhansk.

The worst were the days and times when I physically felt uncontrollable fear, in particular, when my family and friends could not leave Kyiv, Irpen, Bucha, Zaporizhzhia. Now they are safe in different cities of Ukraine. And now I am being angry and calm. Yes, I do feel pain and hatred after the reports about Bucha, Kramatorsk... but there is no fear any more.

**Tetyana Oriekhova:** *What role, in your opinion, does volunteering play during the war?*

**Inha Syvytska:** The role of volunteering indeed cannot be overestimated. These incredible people take on the most important

functions, which for various reasons the state is unable to provide. Many thanks and deep gratitude to each volunteer. This is a separate page in the history of our liberation war, which is yet to be written.

In the first weeks, I weaved camouflage nets for several hours every day at one of the Vinnytsia volunteer centers. It helped to quell the fear of relatives who were in very dangerous cities at the time, it saved me from bad thoughts, it gave me confidence that I was doing something useful for the defenders. Now it is my work that I consider to be my main front. First of all, as a person who used to work at a crisis centre, I feel that it is very useful for the students to communicate at classes, so in addition to “teaching”, I have a “see and support” function. Secondly, I help volunteers with a penny, and I need to earn it.

**Hanna Sereda:** Volunteering has several lines of influence on the military situation. It is obvious that, first of all, volunteering helps to promptly address the need to provide military units in need of protection, support the livelihood of our defenders, provide emergency humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons, residents of occupied territories, where centralized supply and official deliveries of humanitarian cargo face organizational, bureaucratic, and logistical difficulties. Some volunteer heroes, risking their own lives, save civilians in occupied cities, which is a priori impossible for the authorities to do.

Volunteering is currently also becoming a lifeline for the refugees and displaced people who experience complete confusion in life, losing their jobs and housing, as well as irrational guilt for their own helplessness in a new place. Therefore, involving them in possible volunteering helps them find meaning in life, get rid of discomfort feelings and guilt before the host community.

At the heart of volunteering it is the desire to help, to bring victory to all means available to us. In the future, I see volunteering as a strong basis for civil society institutions – public organizations, associations that will take an active part in building our democratic state.

I was active in volunteering in the first weeks of the war, until the distance learning process at the university was resumed. At the place where my children and I were staying, together we took up weaving camouflage nets for the military. It should be noted that we already did it in the same school in 2014, when we first escaped here with relatives. But then a few of us came after school – only three of us – my daughter, and I, and her friend. They also laughed that there used to be only Donetsk residents who weaved nets there. And then the hall appeared to be full of people – locals, and also immigrants – women, children, youth.

I remember everyone singing the Ukrainian songs – “Chervona Ruta”, “Oi, u luzi” – I had not experienced such a feeling of unity for the common victory for a long time.

*Amaliia Elhaddad:* I am trying to help as much as I can. During this period I have been cutting cloth and weaving nets for the military, helping the volunteers with collecting basic necessities, my family have been giving our own belongings to the people in need, as well as transferring funds to the accounts of the Armed Forces. I believe that the war affects everyone and it is during this period that we must get united and support each other as never before. It helps to feel strong and unbreakable. Ukrainians have become very united and this is what makes us an invincible people. In my opinion, volunteering brings people together, makes them one big family being able to do anything and being capable of everything. It is these emotions that awaken in us faith in a bright future and faith in our victory. That is, together we are strong!

*Anastasiia Tkachuk:* Volunteering is what we can do in order to help our soldiers now. Not everyone can hold a weapon and use it. But we simply do not have the right to stand aside when our cities are being shelled and destroyed, our people are being killed and our home, our Ukraine, is being taken away. Everyone's contribution, even a small one, is now crucial.

**Tetyana Oriekhova:** *We believe in our Victory because we feel the strength, power and unity of our people. What do you plan to do after the war?*

**Oleksandra Vasyk:** After the war, I hope that the world is going to change, like most of the views of our citizens, we will definitely take a new political course. As a student, I will continue to study and get a higher education, but my global views and the worldview will change unequivocally and irreversibly. In fact they are already undergoing some particular changes in many things. I am also planning to see my loved ones much more often and keep in touch with them, because, unfortunately, it is in the most difficult times for us that we begin to appreciate our family and realize the importance of our relationship.

**Yuliia Dovhaliuk:** I did stay at home and I hope it will continue to be so. Of course, I will wait for all the friends who have just gone abroad and hug them. I will stop postponing life, start living the moment and enjoy each and every positive emotion. And definitely, I will by all means support everything which is Ukrainian and promote the Ukrainian language and culture even more.

**Amaliia Elhaddad:** After the war, I plan to enjoy all the everyday and familiar things I didn't value so much before: a good night sleep, participating in my University classes, the sun's rays coming out on a cloudy day, spending time with my family and friends, and more. In this difficult time, I have come to realize that it is important to appreciate every minute, every person, everything I have got. I also want to travel to all parts of our country, because it is so beautiful here.

**Inha Svytska:** There are many plans I have got. I want to take part in the restoration of the destroyed Ukrainian cities, in particular, physically – to disassemble, clean, plant trees and flowers... I want to go abroad, to Poland, and finally, to make my dream come true – to find my relatives. The main thing for me here is go to the Ukrainian peaceful Donetsk and walk across the streets decorated with yellow and blue flags...

**Hanna Sereda:** It seems so challenging to plan in the conditions of war, especially when you do not know its possible duration, as well as the actions of the occupier and our international partners. We should still adjust to life at the moment – keep on working, taking care of the loved ones, volunteering, and what is most important – not to expect, but to act, and at the same time to firmly believe in our victory, to dream of meeting relatives on the other front line, and of restoring cities, towns and the state as a whole. One is just being captivated by the feeling of common Ukrainian dreams and unity of the Nation!

So, as a result of almost two months of war, the Ukrainian nation has passed great trials. The whole world admires the stability of our spirit, the unity of our society around achieving one important goal – preserving the independence and territorial integrity of our country, preserving Ukrainians as a nation!



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**Andrii Shymanovych**  
*Archpriest of the Cherkasy Diocese  
of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Cherkasy*

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## **Russia's neo-imperial Titanic against the iceberg of Ukrainian political nation**

**T**he first thing that attracts attention in the vortex of the new Russian-Ukrainian war is the incredible and unprecedented consolidation of the entire Ukrainian society aimed at preserving Ukrainian statehood. This spiritual upliftment and cohesion can be considered the final profound awareness of one's authenticity and the true birth of the Ukrainian political nation. If both the Maidans of 2004–2005 and 2013–2014 were characterized by a rather noticeable fragmentation of society along the East-West line, the current unveiled aggression from Russia has become a real shock for everyone, rapidly prompting the immediate unity of all citizens of Ukraine from Uzhgorod to Luhansk, from Chernihiv to Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kherson.

Few have any doubts that we are dealing not simply with the suppression of certain political ambitions on the part of the Kremlin, but with a purposeful and methodically implemented genocide of the Ukrainian nation. Mariupol (the city of the Virgin Mary) became one of the tragic symbols of the confrontation between the indomitability of the Ukrainian spirit and all-consuming hatred, the total destruction of the Russian military machine, which does not recognize any international conventions and generally accepted methods of warfare. There is no rational basis that could be used to explain the deliberate shooting of thousands of civilians, the attack on the Mariupol maternity hospital and drama theatre where

women and children were sheltered, and the systematic destruction of the infrastructure of other cities of Ukraine with thousands of people. Of course, this is not a “special operation”. And this is not even just another war of aggression. This is an outpouring of irrational hatred, this is an existential confrontation, a deliberate revenge against the Ukrainian nation, which dared to finally break free from the shackles of the Soviet Union, build its own future and become the center of fundamental value transformations in modern Europe. All those sprouts of independence, autonomy, subjectivity that gradually appeared during the three decades of Ukraine's independence, and which each time hinted at Ukraine's eventual fall out of the Kremlin's orbit, immediately caused arrogance and irony, which has now turned into unrestrained rage and frenzy.

The accumulated experience of social disorientation, depression and resentment over the covid lockdown on both sides of the front, accumulated over the past two years, manifested itself in a diametrically opposite way: in Russia – as a burst of unmotivated aggression, another determined attempt to embody neo-imperial delusions; in Ukraine – in the form of final defragmentation and unification of the nation in order to preserve its own identity. Moreover, at such historical breaks, the crisis of ideologies manifests itself in the form of a radical polarization of good and evil, the final separation of light and darkness, Divine truth and refined infernal lies. The polar categories of human existence in the conditions of war are highlighted and become obvious even without any complicated theoretical analysis. The binary perception of reality is sharpening. Undoubtedly, long, deep, refined intellectual reflections on the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022, using a sophisticated philosophical interpretation apparatus, is a vital matter of the immediate post-war future. But now every person is offered to decide in clearly defined realities and make his own existential choice for one benefit or another. D. Bongeffier wrote incredibly aptly and sublimely about

radical polarization at tragic breaks in history, and his words can be fully adapted to today's extreme reality:

*Today, sinners and saints are revealed again in all openness. Black clouds and bright lightning flashes emerge from the heavy twilight of a rainy day. Contours become extremely sharp. The reality is revealed. We are talking about Shakespearean images. However, sinners and saints do not engage in ethical programs, they rise from the abyss, with their appearance they open the depths of the diabolical and divine from which they emerged and allow us to glimpse the unknown mysteries [Bonhoeffer D. 2013: 51-52].*

I would like to note that Putin's invincible misanthropy deserves special attention. Remembering the horrified faces of innocently killed and maimed Ukrainian children, it is almost impossible not to draw an obvious parallel: in his hatred for everything new-born, for everything modern, creative and blooming, in his rootedness in cave-like archaism, the Kremlin dictator – whether consciously or otherwise involuntarily – likened himself to the infamous king Herod. It was this ruler who gave the order to kill all the babies in Bethlehem (Mt. 2:16), in order not to give a chance for survival to the God-child born in this city, who came into this world in order to renew the face of the earth forever, and who will later announce: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

The ideological basis by which the government of the aggressor country tries to justify its actions in Ukraine deserves a separate review. In one of the theological works devoted to the understanding of post-Soviet realities in the field of theological education, the author provides a surprisingly apt and concise definition of what distinguishes Putinism as a separate socio-political phenomenon of the beginning of the 21st century: *"Putinism is a system based on a maniacal idea of Slavic unity and a paranoid fear of the West"*. [Cherenkoff, M., Searle, J. 2015: 55]. Such a laconic definition is unlikely to provoke a fierce discussion. At the same time, if we try to develop this idea a little and isolate certain elements of the more global concept of the

“Russian measure”, it turns out that this cumbersome and internally contradictory neo-imperial project is built on too shaky a foundation. This ideological construction, being a textbook example of a repressive totalizing discourse, has an eclectic essence and contains a rather colourful and surprising set of seemingly incompatible components: traditional family values, Orthodoxy, anti-Westernism, rampant militarism, Chekist revanchism with a relentless search for enemies people and foreign agents, the hypertrophied and sacralized cult of the victory of 1945 with devastating all-encompassing propaganda like “We can do it again!” (although, ironically, so far only the war crimes of the Nazis, not the successes of the anti-Hitler coalition, can be “repeated”), as well as the idealization of the pre-revolutionary imperial past and, at the same time, the interpretation of the Soviet era as a supposedly natural continuation of the Russian autocracy. Such an internally unbalanced system cannot but be contradictory in relation to empirical reality. That is why the perverse neo-imperial ideology of the “Russian world” bears incredible resistance to any attempts to rationalize it, being only a cunning uneducated fiction, a painful quasi-religious dream and a pseudo-prophetic vision, an ecstatic slogan that does not fit in principle into any logical scheme and goes beyond the rational.

Currently, the loud rhetoric about the universal mission of Russia is strangely consistent with the mentality of the “besieged fortress”, with the cheerful acceptance of any economic sanctions from the West, with the consent to total isolationism, solipsism and self-removal from the world political, economic, intellectual-scientific and other contexts . And all this monstrous ideology, densely mixed with haughty self-confidence and an absolute nationwide conviction in its infallibility, as a result became the foundation for the majority of the population of Russia to squeeze out of their minds any doubts about their own messianism and divine election, at the same time losing the remnants of common sense and basic notions of mercy,

compassion, and humanity. K. Barth was truly right, who aptly observed the following:

*The danger of war arises from the fact that too many people take themselves too seriously, frighteningly seriously. ...The main task of Christians is man; therefore, a person and his dignity become for them a measure and a condition for the correctness of all principles and ideas; that is why they rebel against any ideas that claim to be unconditional. ...In any situation, under any political regime, the Church must take care of people and their welfare. The Lord became a Man; since then man has become the measure of all things for the Church [Barth K. 2006: 20, 93, 105].*

Therefore, it seems obvious that the newly created Ukrainian political nation has received permanent ideological immunity and from now on, no, even softened versions of the doctrine of the "Russian world", no models of Eurasianism and theories regarding the pretended "unity of the Slavic peoples" will be able to become acceptable in Ukraine. From now on, their toxicity and lethality are obvious for at least several generations of Ukrainians. It will be like this as long as those babies who came into this world live in bomb shelters, in subway stations or in maternity homes, on the roofs of which Russian bombs and rockets flew. As long as these children are alive and will be able to tell the terrible details of the war to their children and grandchildren, there will be no tolerance in Ukraine for any attempts by the Russian intellectual elite to reattach Ukraine to itself and enchant it with another quasi-philosophical ideological darkness, which will serve as a theoretical basis for another genocide of Ukrainians. At the same time, I would like to note that even after the war, the topic of "Russian world" should not become hushed up or taboo. Instead, Ukrainian philosophers, theologians, sociologists, and historians should meticulously reflect on this doctrine, prepare its theoretical foundations and demonstrate to the entire critical-thinking world its ontological meaninglessness, caricature, and unsustainability.

The irrationality of the Kremlin's actions is already obvious. However, my personal cautious prediction is that the longer this bloody adventure continues, the more diametrically opposed results Putin will achieve compared to his originally emphasized strategic objectives. Demilitarization? From now on, the army of Ukraine will become the basic supporting structure of Ukrainian statehood for a long time. Denazification? The surge of national self-awareness and cohesion subsided very soon after the end of hostilities. Salvation of the supposedly “exiled” Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine? After the war, the future of this structure seems uncertain and illusory, to say the least, given that the level of public tolerance for this structure is already approaching zero. Removal of President Zelensky? Putin's actions have already secured him a second presidential term and, quite possibly, even the Nobel Peace Prize. Why so? The answer is obvious: all of the above are natural consequences of irrational thinking, when speculative meta-historical theories do not have any points of intersection with objective reality. Truly great ideas are not delivered in tanks, and truly outstanding philosophical concepts are not crushed by airstrikes. The most certain criteria for the relevance of this or that social theory are its internal consistency, practical expediency for achieving the general public good, and, if desired, its aesthetic appeal.

One thing is certain, the active social activity of the Christian communities of Ukraine and their coordinated work in many directions attract a lot of attention. Being under daily devastating attacks by the Russian army, pastors and priests of many churches, who had previously been inclined to moderate or more deeply realized forms of pacifism, came to understand the fragility of this theological construction and began to actively revise both their theological beliefs and the practice of their spiritual life. Myroslav Wolff, professor of theology at Yale University, commented on this matter: “Faith in non-violence... can only be born in a quiet suburb. But on the scorched, blood-soaked land of the innocent, this faith will not last a day” [Volf M. 2014: 364]. The murder of the daughter

of the Mariupol pastor G. Mohnenko and three chaplains of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, several dozen children killed, women raped, murdered and then mined, numerous examples of targeted shooting of peaceful Ukrainians, humanitarian convoys, evacuation convoys – all these examples of concentrated evil may become the last nail in the coffin of an excessively benevolent, rosy-dreamy Christianity, which has forgotten that the peacemakers mentioned in Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9), who are promised God's sonship, are not those who, with folded hands, passively await the miraculous arrival of peace or only pray for his coming. Peacemakers are those heroic people who actively create peace, who resist evil, who stand up for the unjustly humiliated, oppressed and disadvantaged, who for the sake of peace daily risk their lives for their friends and neighbors (John 15:13).

In the conditions of final discredit and moral bankruptcy of some church structures, in particular, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which not only tacitly approved the actions of the Kremlin, but also actively contributed to the realization of the idea of “Russian world”, Christian communities are called to conduct a counter-propaganda educational campaign with overcoming any Europhobia, which is still characteristic of thousands of Orthodox Ukrainians. Having been ideologically indoctrinated from the pulpits of MP temples for a long time, many of them are sincerely convinced that Western civilization is the alleged shelter and breeding ground of incurable evil in the form of all possible immoral theories and practices. One of the detoxifying antidotes against this ideological bias and uncritical anti-Westernism can be the excellent theological work of Aristotle Papanikolaou “The Mystical as Political” [Papanikolaou A. 2021], in which the famous Orthodox researcher and professor at Fordham University reasonably deconstructs the imperial ethos of life and thinking of the Orthodox Church, proving complete acceptability for the Orthodox community to live and achieve salvation in the conditions of a liberal-democratic state system.

What will the destruction of established patterns of thinking and life lead to? Will we have enough strength to preserve and not spill the social cohesion that we have acquired at such a high price? Will the currently existing forms of horizontal network civil solidarity be preserved to some extent? Will the consequences of total propaganda on the territory of Russia, fueled by the post-imperial syndrome, be somehow finally overcome? Undoubtedly, the current quite understandable state of psychological frustration does not contribute to calm reflection, balanced analysis and reasonable forecasting of the future. But all the mentioned questions are the ground for further investigations in the field of political philosophy, social communications and philosophical anthropology.

Finally, I will say: I sincerely believe that later representatives of the Ukrainian intellectual elite will speak in detail and develop all thematic areas that emerge and attract attention in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Of course, all the ideas presented in these reflections are only the first fragmentary intuitions, which will later be thoroughly understood and conceptualized. The scientific treasury of Ukraine must be enriched with a considerable number of essays, scientific articles and dissertations, in which the outlined issues in the field of humanitarianism will be carefully disclosed and analyzed. But after the war. More precisely, after our military victory, because we have already achieved a moral victory.

This text was written on the 22nd day of the war. At this time, many Ukrainians, being in the valley of gloom, sorrow and despair, experiencing the onslaught of undisguised devilish evil, have a full moral right to cry out in unison with the Crucified Savior: "My God! Oh my! Why did you leave me?" (Mk. 15:34). However, we believe and know that the dream time will inevitably come when all Ukrainians will have reason to proclaim with one mouth and one heart: "Here He is, our God! we trusted in Him, and He saved us! This is the Lord; we trusted in Him; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation!" (Is. 25:9).



## **My passport is blue with a golden trident**

**T**here is no future in a country where the tragedy is the closure of McDonald's and the lack of freedom is normal. These are the words I would like to begin my letter with. It is not very difficult to understand which country we are talking about. "We are fraternal peoples, we have a common past, a common history, we have been fighting side by side in World War II against the fascist regime, we have won together!" – Such words are spoken by many citizens of the modern Russian Federation. Is this really true?

For almost 70 years Ukraine, Russia and 13 other republics have been members of an integration union called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Formally, the USSR was a union of republics, but in practice it was a one-party dictatorship with a high level of centralization of leadership and a command-and-control economy controlled by the communists party. This is a short, concise answer to the question of Ukraine's common past with the "fraternal people". Since 1991, the paths of Ukraine and Russia have diverged. And I can say with great confidence that this is exactly what has happened. I will not dwell on the 30 years during which Ukraine has been actively developing the institutions of democracy, civil society, human rights and a number of virtues that are the highest values of mankind, Russia has been longing for the past Soviet times, when you could buy ice cream for 20 cents, bread – for 13 in stores called "Berezka" or "Topoliok", wear the same gray things, "wooden shoes", and have the opportunity after school or vocational school to work all his life at one factory. For some reason, current Russians

remember these very facts of everyday life and sincerely miss those times, and very few who speak publicly about the censorship that prevailed in those “beautiful” Soviet times, persecution for dissent and decades of camps for crimes “against state”. Few members of the “fraternal people” remember these facts, and the fact that the ice cream has been delicious is unsurpassed. And it is not for nothing that I am ironic here, because this very irony is connected with the thesis from which the letter has begun.

Nations for which values are radically different cannot be fraternal. Values are the basis on which a nation is formed and its place and reputation in the world community are determined. Satisfaction of primary needs and satisfaction of spiritual needs are completely different things, and they clearly show the differences, not the similarity of the paths taken by Ukraine and Russia in the last 30 years. And the horrific events that took place at four o’clock in the morning (symbolically, right?) on February 24, 2022 in Ukraine due to the barbaric invasion of Russia in Ukraine, once again confirm that we are completely different. Of course, history knows cases of fratricidal war, but this audacity, when a real, full-fledged war with the use of modern weapons against civilians, is called a special military operation, causes indignation, anger, contempt and hatred of the “fraternal people”.

Thus, on February 24, 2022, the real war of Russia against Ukraine, dictatorship against democracy, meanness against humanity, predatory thirst for blood against the desire to LIVE began. Living on their land, in my cities and villages, in their homes surrounded by family and friends... When I write these lines, it seems to me that all this I have dreamed, that it is not true, and tomorrow I will wake up and think with horror: “What a terrible dream, thank God, it's a dream”. Oh, no, I go to bed with fear to wake up tomorrow, and I wake up with fear to live the day until evening. I work hard to distract my thoughts, I hardly watch the news, only in the evening to stay up to date.

Could I have imagined that me, a human who was forced to leave her home in 2014 due to the Russian occupation of her native Donetsk region, would have to go through this horror again, already in the heart of Ukraine, in Vinnytsia region? The answer is simple. – No. By the way, just a couple of weeks before the war, I had to speak on local radio as an expert on a possible full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. At that time, I assured the audience, as a doctor of economic sciences, that it was unlikely and unprofitable for Russia, especially from an economic point of view, because a package of the most severe sanctions for Russia would be imposed by the Western world. The economic systems of the world today are in very close international relations, and Western sanctions against Russia would deal a devastating blow to its economic system. When I argued in favour of my opinion, I was guided solely by common sense and professional knowledge. But the Russian leadership clearly demonstrates, to put it mildly, illogicality and a certain surrealism. Resolving the war against Ukraine is not a demonstration of force, it is absurd and, I think, a complete misunderstanding of the consequences of their actions.

As expected, sanctions have been imposed on Russia, and they are very strict, covering not only the economic spheres, trade and the financial system, but also imposing bans on oligarchs and the Russian leader's inner circle. In some respects, Russian citizens already feel the lack of benefits of the “rotting” event: world-famous brands are leaving Russian markets, social networks are blocked, retail prices are rising, the ruble is falling sharply, the national currency is depreciating and the welfare of the population is falling. But some experts say it will take about a year to bury the Russian economy and nail an uncut wooden cross to its grave. Year, somewhere so...

Unfortunately, Russian bombs, which fly almost around the clock to MARIUPOL, KHARKIV, KYIV, CHERNIHIV from military planes, do not wait a year, they kill Ukrainian children instantly,

without alternative, not giving time to move to the shelter, not giving the opportunity to whisper the last: “MOM”, not giving the opportunity to become adults. Therefore, sanctions are, of course, an effective measure, but only for the civilized world.

There is little hope for a speedy end of the war, and diplomatic talks on a peace agreement add more questions than answers. On March 29, 2022, another round of talks between the Ukrainian and Russian sides, with, to put it mildly, interesting results, took place in Istanbul. So, the diplomats agreed on the following:

- representatives of the Russian Federation promised that the intensity of the fire would be reduced “several times” and troops would be withdrawn from Kyiv and Chernihiv;
- Russian diplomats “accepted the proposal” of the President of Ukraine to hold a personal bilateral meeting with the Russian leader;
- negotiations on the status of Crimea are proposed to be held for 15 years without hostilities on its territory;
- the presidents were invited to discuss the status of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in a personal meeting;
- Ukraine is ready to accept non-aligned status in the presence of strict documentary guarantees from countries that are ready to act as guarantors;
- Russian diplomats noted that Russia is “not against” Ukraine's integration into the EU;
- the peace treaty must be adopted as a result of a referendum and signed after a complete ceasefire; after which it must be ratified by the Parliament of Ukraine and the parliaments of the guarantor countries.

The extreme meeting of diplomats was called quite productive in the press. However, given the results, it can be concluded that precious time will continue to be lost, killing many more civilians who are unable to leave the blocked cities due to the lack of real humanitarian corridors. The question also arises when a version of the peace treaty will be developed so that a referendum can be held.

Again, this is a waste of time. All this time, Russian troops will continue to shell Ukrainian cities, killing people and destroying infrastructure. The question of Crimea remains unclear, why did the parties agree to negotiate its status for exactly 15 years, why should the presidents discuss the status of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in a personal meeting? I believe that the results of the talks have been called fruitful very hastily: a clear vision of the loss of time and ambiguity of certain positions of the parties, which have raised additional issues, is clearly formed.

We continue to live and work in a mode of fear, uncertainty and expectations. We were destined to go through these difficult times, which our ancestors also had to go through, because history is cyclical, and, unfortunately, it repeats itself. However, the victory will be for Ukraine, because today, the Ukrainian nation is experiencing a very strong unity and demonstrates great strength of spirit. We are talked about all over the world as brave and indomitable people who defend justice and the borders of our native state at the cost of our own lives. I have a document proving my identity, it is blue with a golden trident on the cover. I am UKRAINIAN!

## **Fictional reasons for real Russian aggression**

**T**he fate of the historical generation of my compatriots faced many challenges: the fight against fascism, all manifestations of the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, the disastrous 90s, a galaxy of revolutions, several pandemic waves and the fight against fascism again. Yes, history no longer speaks to us from the pages of textbooks, scientific articles or archival documents, it mercilessly throws in the face of the world the fact that it has a cyclical nature. And it happens in the most terrible way.

Will we learn this lesson? Will we make the right conclusions? Hard to tell.

The war that is currently taking place on the territory of Ukraine was unleashed for fictitious reasons. Moreover, this is the first war in the world where the aggressor country cannot afford to name the true grounds for invading the territory of a neighbouring state. Even Hitler's Germany did not hide its criminal intentions regarding the extermination of certain ethnic groups, the fight against communism, and did not tell in its mass media that the Soviet army was bombing its cities with its own hands and the prisoners of concentration camps were burning themselves. The cynicism of the Russian federal channels surpassed even the propaganda of Joseph Goebbels, whom Vladimir Putin called a talented person. They tell Russians every day that the Ukrainian military is robbing, killing their peaceful compatriots, razing their houses to the ground in Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Okhtyrka, Mariupol, Kherson, Mykolaiv and other cities and villages of Ukraine. The average Russian TV viewer does not want to

ask himself why all this did not happen before February 24, 2022 and who actually commits these crimes. The majority of the population of the Russian Federation lacks critical thinking and healthy skepticism.

Russia declares that it wants to de-Nazify the territory of Ukraine and for eight years in a row continues to tell how Nazism flourishes on Ukrainian land, a land where the nationalist Svoboda party cannot even get five percent to pass to the Verkhovna Rada, in a country where the elected president was a Russian-speaking Jew. Russian propaganda has already gone so far as to call Volodymyr Zelenskyi the wrong Jew. A fair question arises: are all those thousands of Israelis who come to the squares of their cities with the flag of Ukraine also supporters of Ukrainian Nazism? The truth is that during the shelling of Kharkiv on March 18, a Russian shell flew into the apartment and killed 96-year-old Boris Romanenko, the vice-president of the International Buchenwald-Dore Committee, a survivor of four Hitler concentration camps.

The real reason for Russia's criminal aggression is that the corrupt Russian government is not afraid of NATO bases near its borders (because these bases have been there since 2004, when the Baltic countries joined the North Atlantic Alliance), but that the example of a successful democratic Ukraine will become a role model for the Russian people. And even this zombified people may start asking the Russian authorities extremely uncomfortable questions, such as why Ukrainians live well without gas and oil, while we work for food with our fuel and energy resources. With all the internal Ukrainian problems associated with the resistance to reforms of part of the Ukrainian elite, the movement towards European civilization was undeniable. The Russian authorities saw all this. And what it is doing now in Ukraine is nothing more than revenge on the Ukrainian people, for their free European choice, for the fact that they mentally get out of the Soviet swamp, for the fact that they choose the government in fair elections, for the fact that that they loves their independent Ukraine.

As for Russophobia, which Russian propaganda is now actively talking about, it does not exist, there is only hatred for the occupiers, which is characteristic of any nation whose territorial integrity is encroached by the enemy. What the Hungarians felt in 1956 towards the Soviet soldiers, can it be called Russophobia? These were the natural emotions of people whose will was suppressed by Soviet tanks. That is why many Russians are fighting on the side of Ukraine in this war against the Russian Federation, because this war is not international, but mental. People with a European consciousness oppose those who were raised on the basis of imperial-chauvinistic ideology.

The indignation of representatives of the Russian authorities regarding the growth of anti-Russian sentiments in Europe and Ukraine looks very strange. That is, the Kremlin first occupies a part of the territory of a neighbouring country according to Hitler's Sudeten methods, when it bombs peaceful Ukrainian residents, those whom it came to liberate from the Nazis, when it destroys weapons' warehouses in the Czech Republic, poisons the citizens of England with newbies, tries to stage a coup d'état in Montenegro, finances the far-right radical parties of Europe, and then he (Kremlin) begins to wonder that Russia looks like an evil empire in the eyes of Europeans in general and Ukrainians in particular.

Moreover, with such reckless and criminal actions, Russia turned into its enemies even a part of those who treated it with sympathy. Those who used to be more than loyal to Russia until February 24, 2022, boxer Oleksandr Usyk, Odesa Mayor Genadiy Trukhanov, Kharkiv Mayor Igor Terekhov, former deputies of the pro-Russian Party of Regions Oleksandr Vilkul and Mykhailo Dobkin and many others have already cursed Russia and called it a fascist state.

If you carefully compare the declarations and actions of the Russian government, you can see that the Russian people, whom it wants to protect in Ukraine, so to speak, are completely alien and



indifferent to it. If this were not the case, real programmes for the resettlement and support of compatriots would operate in Russia, as it works, for example, in Hungary and Israel. In the Russian Federation, in order to get a passport even for those who love this country with all their heart and want to live in it, it is necessary to visit the migration service for years, whose employees constantly demand to submit more and more new documents and hint that a bribe should be given to speed up the process. Residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have been complaining about long queues and checks at the border with the Russian Federation for eight years. And what prevented Russia from allowing the import of products from the so-called LPR and DPR into its territory for eight years? It is an undeniable fact that Russia has never been and is not interested in people. It needs only territories that she is unable to equip. A vivid example is Abkhazia, which it “protected” from Georgia. Poverty and impoverishment have reigned on its territory for thirty years, but Abkhazia could be a tourist centre on a par with Batumi. Russia has turned the same Crimea into a full-fledged military base, where the population, accustomed to Ukrainian freedom, currently has no rights, only obligations.

In the Russo-Ukrainian war, it is important to understand, first of all for the West, that the Russian people are not held hostage by several hundred officials of the Russian government. We now see that there are no multimillion-dollar rallies in the Russian Federation against Russian aggression in Ukraine. This means that the Russian government has the tacit support of the majority of the Russian people. Therefore, the sanctions that the EU imposes on various sectors of the Russian economy, and not only on individual oligarchs, are absolutely fair and will have their consequences. The Russian people must understand that they are complicit in the crimes committed by their government. They should feel a significant deterioration in his own financial situation, this should force them to analyze the reasons for what is happening.

The West also needs to understand that it must be ready to give a tough response to Putin's nuclear blackmail. Yes, the president of the Russian Federation has nowhere to retreat, he is an international criminal, but here it is important to understand that he alone is not capable of starting a nuclear war. Those people who will have to carry out his criminal order clearly understand that this will lead to the inevitable death of Russia and they, unlike their president, have something and someone to lose. Therefore, the West does not need to fear Putin's Russia in the future, denying Ukraine offensive weapons.

At the time when the Russian Federation lowers the totalitarian veil unprecedented in the history of mankind, repressively supporting the silent criminal unity of its own citizens, the Ukrainian people demonstrate to the whole world conscious solidarity and loyalty to European values. It is already clear that Ukraine won, long before the end of hostilities on its territory.

Currently, I am staying with my family in Cherkasy. With faith in Ukraine!

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# The moment when life changed forever

## Letters from Ukraine

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