

This is the fifth letter we received

Out of Kyiv, but still in Ukraine:

Briefly, we're safe but not yet out of the soup. We received a phone call - a man had room for 4 in his car to Kyiv's Central Railway Station and we took the leap.

The man is part of the Territorial Defense Corps that you may have heard about. It's any able body that can go through training in order to do anything for the defense of the country. From working as a cook, a field or urban medic, part of a crew that lugs sandbags to creat block posts/checkpoints in the city (these are everywhere in kyiv's main arterials now and it's spooky). They also are trained to pick up a weapon.

When this is over and the media ghouls start obsessing on the body count, a significant portion of the dead will be regular folks - not professional soldiers - who took time off their job writing software, teaching kindergarten, laying brick to defend their homeland from an enemy arriving in tanks. That is Ukraine's Territorial Defense Corps.

Conspicuous among them are folks who should be growing roses and spoiling their grandkids. Young and old, Ukrainians are in this together.

It'd probably terrify most western nations to learn that in most Ukrainian public schools there's a class called grazhdanskaya oborona - civil defense. A leftover from Soviet days in which boys and girls are taught to assemble, disassemble, maintain and, importantly, use a rifle. A Kalashnikov. My wife can shoot, as the saying goes, the eye out of a bird flyin'.

To maintain peace we must prepare for war. I wish the world were different. It is not and no amount of wishing or politics - clearly - will make it so.

We bought tickets for 3 trains and managed to get on one of them. People brought their pets--dogs, cats, birds. Or boys made friends with one woman's rabbit.

The cars were packed, overpacked, every seat, every space that was not a seat. Some people sat in the toilet. COVID be damned.

Our tickets took us only 80% of the way to our goal. With the wind whipping through the station we slept bundled up on the granite floors of the train station in Khmelnytsky, to the west. Curfew in the city from 8 o'clock on. This morning it's my hips that are made of granite.

Clothes on our backs, two backpacks, documents, phones, water. Snowing in Khmelnytsky.

A friend picked us up and took us the last leg - a 90-minute drive that lasted 5 1/2 hours because of all the checkpoints.

Soldiers, police, firearms. Camouflage. Boyrs gets car sick and it was a rough ride for him. Inna made up riddles--first in English, then Russian, then Ukrainian. Liliya is struggling. Kyiv is besieged. Her home.

Today, our neighbor called to say he felt the windows in our building rattle from a large explosion nearby. Shortly after, he called again to say a missile had hit Kyiv's Central Railway Station - the place where we waited for hours yesterday before getting our train.

The depot is standing and the trains continue to run, if not exactly on time. The residential heating main for that part of Kyiv was destroyed. No heat in below freezing temperatures.

Vladimír Putin has created out of whole cloth - gibbering and drooling about "Nazis" and "genocide" - an excuse to wage war. He and his cronies refer to it as "a peacekeeping mission."

The reality is that Ukraine is under relentless assault from a rogue state and its criminal president and his clan.

Political solutions will not stop the criminal and the chaos he lusts for. This nation's sole temporal hope lies in the truth that the terror has not gone unchecked - Ukraine, Ukrainians, are fighting for their lives.

What hurts is the seeming truth that so many celebrated world leaders are committed to seeing this fight through...to the last Ukrainian.

Writing on a phone, apologies for the fractured grammar, the typos, the frenzy. We are safe.

Слава Україні