

This is the seventh letter we received. None of these have dates so I don't really know how much time has passed.

I have taken my wife and my boys to a safer part of the country. The odds are good that we have lost our home and that we won't see our city again. I don't mean to discourage—the Ukrainian forces have fought bravely, relentlessly, in the defense of the peace. Their ferocity is borderline miracle stuff. But they are outgunned badly. And you must retain your skepticism with every report hinting at imminent Ukrainian victory. We are just—I have lost count—12 days into this.

And in these 12 days, more than a million Ukrainians have fled the country. Russia has shelled or destroyed 211 Ukrainian schools. Indiscriminate Russian shelling has destroyed medical facilities, and flattened residential areas in Kharkiv, a city of about 1.2 million residents. The refugees from Kharkiv are swarming the main railway station there—the refugee crisis is just beginning. Russia fires on civilians using “green corridors” to evacuate, and, at long last, we have the inevitable appearance of the flotsam on the tide of war, that most debased marker of Russian and Soviet force—rape.

My family, we are not yet refugees, technically. We haven't crossed the border. Silly, these political definitions, aren't they?

Yesterday, as I started writing this, in this relatively peaceful western Ukrainian town, the sirens went off. It was just after 3:00 p.m. and they blared for a full 30 minutes. Followed by jets—don't-know-whose, don't-know-where—one after another overhead, in such rapid succession it felt like sorties. These lasted about 15 minutes. And then, dead silence for the next two hours followed at six by the sirens again: all clear.

The security of this place is temporary. There is nowhere to run to ensure safety. A fact made readily apparent to us here, with Auschwitz lying a few hours drive west, Chernobyl 90 minutes north, and Babi Yar, a 10-minute drive from my flat. And now, with Russian heavy armaments and tens of thousands of Russian troops laying waste to Kharkiv, Donbas, Mariupol, Kherson, the list too long to allow completion—one can only speculate where the new memorial to mass death will be placed.

I won't bamboozle you with myths about a Ukrainian paradise. It's not. But when not being attacked, this nation is trying; the most substantive proof of that lies in its efforts to cut off ties with its primary abuser, Russia. And that has irked the little man in Moscow.

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Hold your loved ones close. Don't lose heart or give in to fear. A life defined by resentment, envy, or revenge is no life. It will lead to nothing good. Another old book says it straight: “...an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

A friend has lent us a small flat for the time being. We house families for a day before they move west. It's like Soviet summer camp here. I can only speak with any certainty for myself, my family: we are struggling but do not lose heart. We are stressed. We wait for Vovchik to carry out his nuclear threat. We take solace in reports—no matter how slicked up by our own media—of any humiliation of the vaunted Russian War Machine.

In the end, we know no more than you do and next to nothing for certain save this:

Envy breeds envy. Resentment, resentment. Madness, madness. And left unopposed, war.

Peace from Ukraine