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## About people and war

**O**n 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?