



THE FORGOTTEN WAR

Dear friends, On May 13, 2017, an artillery shell fired from within separatist-controlled territory landed in a residential neighborhood of Avdiivka, a front-line town in eastern Ukraine.

Three women and a man were standing outside the home where the shell hit. They all died. In an instant two children became orphans.

That same day, the Eurovision Song Contest finals were held in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. Tourists from around the world had flocked to the city for the event. CNN published an article hailing Ukraine as "Eastern Europe's best-kept travel secret."

Two weeks later, Eurovision is over and the tourists are gone. But the war is still there, still killing people, as it has for more than three years.

On this day at the end of May, there is a collage of sights and sounds on Kyiv's central square and epicenter of the 2014 revolution, which overthrew the pro-Russian former president, Viktor Yanukovich.

On the open expanse of the square, fire jugglers entertain onlookers. Artists draw charcoal caricatures while their subjects giggle.

A old mustachioed Cossack smashes coins with wooden a club to the delight of the crowds.

Cranky old babushkas sell rolls of toilet paper adorned with the likeness of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Hardly a whisper of the war in the east, or the revolution that played out here on these streets three years ago.

And that's when you notice another sound. A sublime chanting in a language you don't understand. But something about it catches your attention, as if it doesn't belong among the rest.

Most people in the West are surprised to learn there is a war going on in Ukraine.

And then you see where that chanting was coming from. A crowd seems to orbit around a still mass in the center.

You walk closer to see what it is and then you see the casket with a dead soldier in it. His white face looks like a statue. His arms are folded over his heart and his body is covered in flowers.

You're there to see this just as two soldiers on either side lift up the casket and carry it down the stone steps to a waiting van.

An Orthodox Christian priest leads the chanting. He swings a metal orb that emits a cloud of incense. Another man carries a cross with the dead soldier's name on it. He was 30 years old.

A young woman is crying. No, more than that, she is sobbing. Her chest heaving, she gasps for breath. Uncontrollable grief. Real heartbreak. Your eyes grow moist and a lump forms in your throat.

The soldiers are composed, but their faces are like stone and their eyes are focused on something that

only those who know war could ever see. They are not here, but back there, in the war.

Then, the van with the casket inside is gone. The funeral quickly scatters like a fog burning off, blending into the crowd on this Sunday afternoon.

A cease-fire, called Minsk II, was signed in February 2015, but the war never really ended.

Today, the fighting has devolved into a static, long-range battle mainly fought from trenches and fortified outposts - with young men and civilians wounded and dying every day.

Some front-line towns have become otherworldly places where children go to school amid daily shelling and sniper shots.

Where outdoor markets go on during the daylight hours, while at night people hunker down indoors like there is a monster on the loose that only comes out after dark.

The center square of any typical Ukrainian city is an entirely different world from these places - where surprisingly, war is the farthest thing from even most Ukrainian's minds.

If you want to get a sense of the real war, a military hospital is the place to visit. You'll see young men without a leg or an arm they lost in the war. Most are recovering from debilitating shrapnel wounds. Many are wounded in ways you cannot see.

Delighted that a foreigner has taken an interest in them, they seem eager to share their war stories, recounting

them with great detail and emotion, especially stories involving acts of bravery of fellow soldiers.

And yet, there was one common denominator shared by every wounded soldier I met. It was their passionate resolve to go back to the front lines and be with their 'brothers in arms.' Even those missing limbs had the same wish.

And then there is Anton. A young man just out of his teens and also recovering from battle wounds. He proudly shows me a video on his phone. It was a wedding ceremony taking place next to a tank. His Anton had found love on the front lines; met and married Natalya who is also in the army.

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Most people in the West are surprised to learn there is a war going on in Ukraine. But - **thanks to supporters like YOU** - HART's partner Churches are ministering to wounded soldiers, those living in the "otherworldly" places, and those displaced by the war.

They faithfully and sacrificially serve, by bringing medical care, food, water, clothing and a commodity hard to find in this time of sorrow and hardship - **HOPE.**

Hope in a God that has not forgotten them. Hope in a God that can end this war and return peace to their land.

Hope in a God who teaches them to forgive, that reconciliation is necessary and possible, and loving your enemy is a powerful way to start this process.



YOUR support is helping children in war zones

Pastor Eugene is one of those indefatigable front line servants. He says: *"Your ministry is critically important for us National Pastors working in the War zones with soldiers and refugees. No one gives to us. We are always the ones giving. And...like Moses, our hands get tired during the battle. It is hard to hold up our hands. Then HART comes along side us and give to us, enabling our hands to remain high and be victorious. We are seeing lives changing, families transformed and soldiers coming to the Lord everyday. Thank you HART!"*

Please continue to pray for and support those impacted by this forgotten war: the soldiers and civilians living in harms way, the ministries and volunteers who serve those who live in these war zones. May God richly bless you.

Lloyd Cenaiko
President/Founder



Lloyd and recovering soldier

[Some excerpts from Nolan Peterson's *Ukraine's War Drags on, Out of sight, Out of mind.*]

