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## *With the petal of a bomb*

For telling stories like these, intelligent and good-feeling people, even lifelong friends, have denounced me. Tsar Putin's propagandist is the least they tell me. Also "nostalgic for Stalinism". Others announce the death penalty to me.



War is a compendium of horrors. Also of wonderful acts of friendship, solidarity, heroism and love. Alejandro Kirk tells us all that in these terrible lines. The horror comes from the Nazis of Ukraine, horror that in the "West" nobody counts. The European Union sends weapons to the Nazis, under the pretext of 'the values we share'. No "Western" media mentions the crimes committed by their protégés. From the safety of my home I send Alejandro my admiration and my friendship. Take care of yourself brother. Take care of yourself [N of Politika]



Alexander Kirk – from Donetsk.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently told his fellow citizens that respect for the life of any human being is precisely what makes Ukraine different from Russia.

People of good feelings only desire peace, fraternity, justice and solidarity. Such feelings are manifested in all human expressions: political, ideological, national, religious, affective. Love for children is the ultimate public promise of all authority.

But in the streets and parks of Donetsk something does not add up: capsules fall, propelled by mortars. Projectiles coming from the north, from the neighboring area of Advodka, controlled by Ukraine. Projectiles containing so-called "petals" or "butterflies", which in the air detach and fall delicately on the ground.

They are made of plastic, 12 by five centimeters, of the intense color of the leaves that cover in this summer season the tree-lined avenues and courtyards of the city.

They could be defined as the "only-kill-children". Or animals. A pressure of five kilos is enough to detonate them. Sometimes it is enough to squeeze them with your hands. Or a heat wave. An adult may lose their legs or arms.

They are prohibited by the international conventions to which Ukraine is a party. But there they are, through streets and parks, so that they work according to their design. Last time they rained on the city on Saturday, July 30, the night there is no curfew. And on the morning of Sunday 31, when families usually walk.



Ukrainian military fires an American M777 howitzer in the northeast of the country, July 28, 2022.

No one in Donetsk gives any credence to the Ukrainian version that Russian forces are throwing these devices at their own people. But many do believe it is just another example of the anti-Russian hatred fomented in Ukraine since the neo-Nazi coup d'état of 2014. I hate that these people have felt day by day, cannon by cannon, since 2014, at a cost of about 14,000 lives.

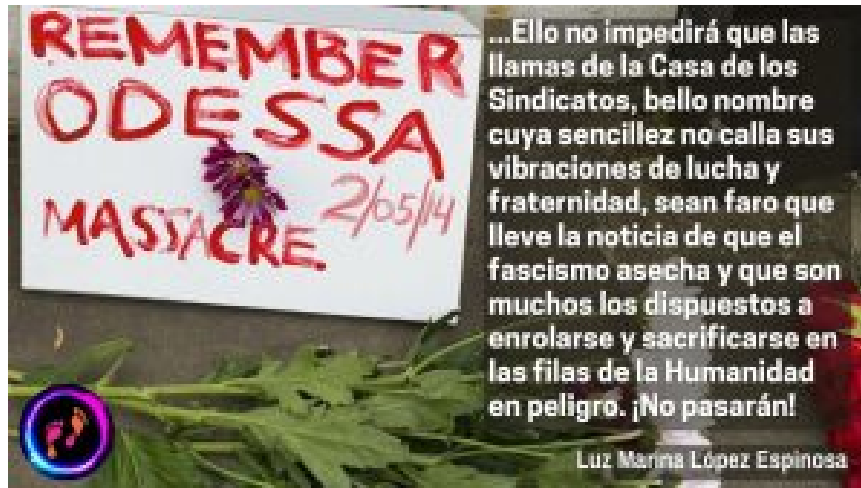
And that we continue to feel every day those of us who are here, and that when we go out anywhere we must be aware of the whistles of missiles, and the "petals" on the floor. Attentive to children and dogs.



A man with a child in his arms. Lorena Sopêna / Europa Press 05/3/2022

And yet living, laughing, meeting brave and dignified people, like the young Daria, mother, owner of a café, dance teacher. "When I tell my relatives in Ukraine about what's going on here, they don't believe me," he says. "They blame the Russians."

"I understand that they shoot us," he adds. "They fight as they fight on this side, they defend their territory, but I can't understand those 'petals'. That has no explanation."



Many have left Donetsk since 2014, when the war began. And others have departed since March, when we arrived in Donbas, and especially since June, when attacks on the city center intensified. Already accustomed to the constant rumble of the artillery that comes and goes, we have also become accustomed to the "arrivals", as they call here the projectiles that arrive.

Like that June morning, when we had a coffee, the immense rumble lifted us from the chairs. We ran in the direction of the noise, following patrols and firefighters. We arrived at Public School #5, in the center, I saw the broken glass, an open door, the intense sun, I run inward with my camera and stumble upon something. I look with horror at the body of a woman in her 40s on the floor, her head in a pool of blood.



She was the cook. Dead while working On a Monday at 11:00 am, when parents and teachers meet to plan the week and to receive food for children receiving distance education.

While there we learned that another nearby school also received loads, at the same time and with the same precision. We ran there. Another woman dead, the entrance destroyed, the beds of the children's nap covered in debris.



"Uncle Sam" hugs an Islamic State terrorist and a Ukrainian Nazi, while telling them, "Welcome to my moderate rebel club." Latuff 2022

We went to the Yelenovka penal complex, where the prisoners - Ukrainian soldiers, neo-Nazi militants and mercenaries - captured in the Azovstal metallurgical plant in Mariupol

are located. A Ukrainian missile landed in the center of the jail and killed more than 50, with more than a hundred wounded. There is no possible mistake: that prison is in the middle of the plain.

One walks around with the camera, or the cell phone, trying to remain calm, not to prejudice, to observe from a distance, weighing the factors of the fact, thinking about those who may have a motivation and profit from these crimes.



But you also go around meeting people, many of them soldiers and militiamen like Sasha and Sergei, two tired fighters aboard a Niva, near the front line. A conversation ensues:

- Where are they going?

— To Novolugansk

— What are they carrying there?

— Food and water

[Novolugansk](#) is a village about 60 kilometers northwest of Donetsk. [A mining town recently taken over by Russian forces and popular militias.](#)

"We guide them, it's very dangerous, it's all mined," says one of them.

He adds: "Stay close. If we accelerate, speed up too: everything is mined and the drones keep an eye on us. They can also see us from the other side.

Thus began a mad race along impossible roads, in which the Lada Niva of the military and our UAZ van "Bujanka" (Bread of mold) showed their warrior nature.

When they arrived, they tell us that Sasha and Sergei went every day since the withdrawal of the Ukrainians to share their rations and any food they found.

We distributed the food, the word spread, people came from all sides, they were ordered behind the van, without shouts, fights or revivals, and many stories to tell.



The same experience of Mariupol, Popasnaya, Lisichansk and Severodonetsk, where we find dozens of Sashas and Sergeis who shared their military rations with the civilian population caught up in the conflict.

Are these cheerful, dirty and tired soldiers who at night throw toy-like mines to kill children?

Marina, an English teacher at Mariupol, tells me: "I was always Ukrainian, proud to be a Ukrainian woman. But not anymore. Everything changed. The only ones who have cared about us are the Russian soldiers."

And in Novolugansk, Victoria, a young mother of two girls, whose tired eyes did not grow her intense beauty: "They told us (ukrainians) every day to leave here. But we stayed. Now we see some light. Home is home." Later I saw his house, entirely destroyed. At its door, an immense blackberry tree.





Almost the same phrase of Daria in the center of Donetsk, who confessed that during the first three months of the Russian operation she did not leave her home. Or Yulia, a resident of the Petrovska district, the hardest hit by Ukrainian artillery, whose daughter begs him to go to none other than Mariupol, today safer than Donetsk.

The Western press does not come to Donbas, it is not interested in these stories. They don't want to know what has been going on here for eight years, let alone tell it.

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I don't respond, I don't get angry, I don't get offended. I can err. I just walk, observe and tell what I find in these steppes. There is no more than that, but not less either.

*Alexander Kirk – from Donestk*

*Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)*

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