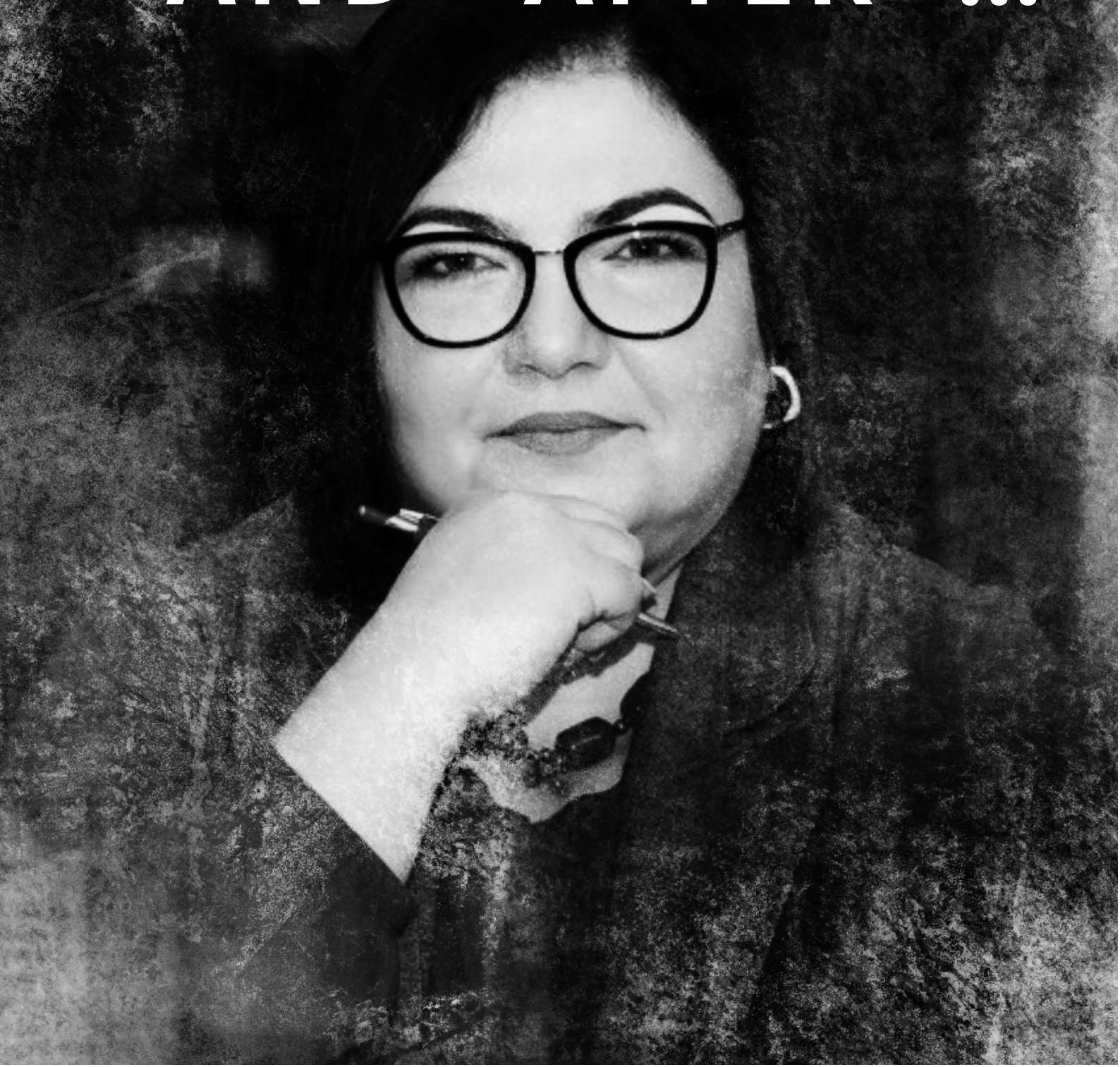


LIFE IS DIVIDED INTO

«BEFORE»

AND «AFTER»...



My son told me that the war had begun. He called me on February 24, 2022, at about 5 am, and said: «Mom, don't worry — Russia has attacked Ukraine. It's a war». It was hard not to worry worry — I am rarely called at 5 AM. I sat on the edge of the bed and felt the cold floor beneath my feet. This somehow brought me to my senses and I immediately began to think about what I should do, what my actions should be. I knew for sure that my help would be needed, but I still did not quite understand to whom and in what form.

My friend called me that day around 8 AM: «My husband and I are at the military enlistment office. I wanted to enlist in the regional defense, but so far nothing is clear. Ruslan volunteers for the Armed Forces, he will go to the front line»...

«I started calling and writing to all my acquaintances who were in Kharkiv, Sumy, Kyiv and other cities — to everyone I thought might be in danger. I asked everyone to come to Ternopil, that I help to find housing, I help everyone, I find everything they need.

My employee, a young woman who is successfully being treated for cancer, told me: "Natalia Vasylivna, I have a big problem. I bought the medicine abroad (we all raised about \$ 1,500) and the delivery was done through Hostomel. Russians are bombing Hostomel. I do not know what to do. I have only 10 days of pills left from the previous course. I really don't know what to do. «I thought that I also do not know what to do, but we need to find a way out. But how?

Another phone call: «Maybe you will help, we are from Chernihiv, we are sitting in the basement, we are buried under the

remains of the destroyed house, but there is electricity. Water and food are passed through the crack. We need medication for blood pressure and diabetes, sedatives, and we have a child with asthma - we really need an inhaler, because of stress asthma attacks have become more frequent. «It took a long time to get to that place, but at that time volunteers did not often go to Chernihiv. They found guys from Lviv. The message about the successful transfer was received through the social network: "Thank you. We really needed this medicine. It is important for us to know that we are not alone.»

Days passed, but in my head it was still February 24... It was like one day. There was no sense of day or night. The first few days we were running down to the basement every time we heard the sirens. There were short-term 40—50 minute alarms, and those when we had to sit in the basement all night. My neighbors are single grandmothers. They were afraid, they asked me to ring the doorbell for them, they were afraid to miss the sirens. The sirens were not very loud in our area. People began to complain, writing on social networks and calling the city council. Within a few days, a car began to drive in the neighborhood, announcing the beginning of the alarm and shutdown through a loudspeaker. And church bells rang. It was awful. It was all associated with films about the Second World War.

**I WAS GOING TO BED  
WEARING CLOTHES  
TO BE ABLE TO REACT  
QUICKLY IF NECESSARY.**

Some of the people ran to the church basement. There the people prayed together with the priests. There was hot tea and cookies. My old neighbors were not able to escape to church. My husband and I set up a basement — benches and chairs, water, cookies, canned food. It was not known how long it would take to sit in the basement.

## **AFTER A MONTH OF SIRENS PEOPLE STARTED TO GET USED TO THEM AND WERE RUNNING LESS AND LESS TO THE BASEMENT.**

Many new people appeared in Ternopil. Lots of cars from other regions of Ukraine. They parked according to the rules or not. We got more traffic jams on the streets. I was not sure if at least one apartment in the city or a hotel room was available anymore. There were so many people to maneuver through on the central streets of the city. Ternopil residents welcomed people in their own apartments and houses. Many of the guests agreed to sleep even on a mattress or on a mat. People from Kharkiv lived with us in my apartment, boys from Severodonetsk and Kyiv lived in my son's apartment (one-bedroom room apartment), my sister and I also lived in a two-bedroom apartment. These were people we didn't know, but they were in trouble and needed a roof over their heads and a cup of hot tea. Many people went abroad. Many have already returned home. But many people live in Ternopil. Some internally displaced people have found work. Although today

it is not so easy to do. Some companies have closed down, mainly due to a lack of logistics.

One day a man from America called me (many people were calling me at the time). He asked for the evacuation of his parents from Kharkiv to Ternopil and then to Warsaw. Two mature persons were traveling by train to Ternopil. The path was not easy. They were lucky to have a seat on the train. At that time, the train cars were overcrowded, people fleeing the shelling went even standing. Due to the threat of shelling, the train in Khmelnytsky changed course to Lviv. I called my classmate and she agreed to meet them and take them home. Elderly woman needed medical help: worried about the bombing, she could not calm down. They were provided with shelter, hot meals, and medical care. In a couple of days, we took them to Warsaw on a humanitarian aid trip.

Local entrepreneurs joined efforts and started to set up temporary shelters, offered free hot meals, medical and psychological support, classes and games for children. Hot meals were provided for the military enlistment office and the regional defense.

## **PEOPLE WERE SHARING FOOD, PERSONAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS, BRINGING MEDICINE.**

There were so many that it exceeded the need. In a few days, large logistics warehouses were organized, where everything carried by people could be stored. Acquaintances and strangers called

me. Some asked to accept their aid, others offered money, help with transportation by own transport. One phone call confused me: "Hello, I killed a pig. I want to bring it to you. « I was confused. But together we are strong and powerful. There were those who were able to process meat and can it, those who provided packaging and everything else one needed. Within a few days, the canned food was delivered to the frontline. I had contacts with the military there. They made inquiries, I tried to organize the collection, purchase and delivery to «close» the request. We delivered products, mats, sleeping bags, tools, chargers, laptops, night vision binoculars, diesel generators, medicines, dressings, turnstiles, first aid kits, camouflage nets, bulletproof vests, vests-organizers, etc. In short, everything they needed. At that time, logistics were disrupted and delivery was mostly done by volunteers. Humanitarian aid was also brought in from abroad. I mostly kept in touch with Ukrainians who work or do business outside of Ukraine.

They organized humanitarian aid, my task was to deliver and distribute as needed. Everyone helped. When men under the age of 60 were banned from leaving Ukraine, women who had the appropriate category of truck driver's licenses drove.

## **ONE DAY A REQUEST CAME UP THAT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME.**

FOR TWO DAYS I COULD  
NOT DARE TO START

## **LOOKING FOR WHERE TO BUY IT. THESE WERE CORPSE BAGS FOR BUCHA.**

The request came three days after information about the atrocities committed by the occupiers was made public. I was already shocked by the information received. But this request literally knocked me off track. All my acquaintances who lived in Bucha and Irpen were lucky enough to evacuate. But now all their own. Familiar and unfamiliar. The request was «closed» with the assistance of the mayor of Krakow.

With each dispatch to the front line or to the occupied territories, we enclosed pictures by children, letters with poems and words of support, angels - talismans made by children with their own hands. This helps to establish special connections and support each other, understanding the importance of each other.

Before Easter, we organized the baking of Easter cakes and the painting of Easter eggs to be sent to the soldiers and the people in the liberated territories. We sent more than 750 packages.

An acquaintance of mine named Maia, a seemingly ordinary, small, slender girl, organized the tailoring of military uniforms. I was looking for fabric and accessories not only in Ukraine. Many times purchases were made in Poland and Italy.

Today, I'm working. Ukraine needs operating enterprises. We are not working at full capacity yet. But I spend my free time collecting, packing, arranging delivery for those who need it. These deliveries are mostly for occupied and liberated territories. As for the Army, almost everything is already organized at the state level. I also help certain persons. I take an active part in relocation assistance for companies that have chosen our region to do business. I am firmly convinced that we will win. Let's keep the line. Everything will be Ukraine.

05.05.2022

***Natalia Ovseyko,***

*owner of the Universal Business Resource consulting company, president of the NGO PARTNERSHIP, vice-president of a separate division of the Ukrainian Business Women NGO in the Ternopil region.*

*Ukraine Ternopil*