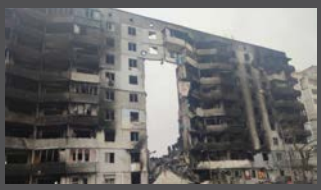
Tetiana Kostiuchenko and
Tamara Martsenyuk (eds.)

RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE 2022

Personal Experiences of Ukrainian Scholars




Ukrainian Voices, vol. 30

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Russia's War in Ukraine 2022

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Personal Experiences of Displaced Scholars

Mobilization of International Academic Networks

Tamara Martsenyuk & Tetiana Kostiuchenko

Introductory note and acknowledgments

We write this introductory chapter two years after the full-scale war started and after we had to flee from Kyiv. These two years gave us ample time to evaluate and reflect on such concepts as solidarity, support, social capital, and trust, as well as long-term resilience and resistance. We are grateful to all the contributors to this book for their reflections on the events of 2022 and for the time spent writing down these reflections, sometimes on the trains or planes between academic activities and sometimes in between blackouts in various parts of Ukraine. For the two of us—Tamara Martsenyuk and Tetiana Kostiuchenko—just as for some of the authors, this text has become a notebook. Each time we came back to it, we returned to February 24, 2022, and the following weeks that changed our lives drastically.

We are also grateful to Andreas Umland and ibidem Press for their prompt confirmation of the book proposal, and to Freie Universität Berlin, and particularly to Prof. Katharina Bluhm, for supporting its publication. Our chapter would have been much harder to get finalized without the support from Leuphana University Lüneburg in the form of MWK fellowships for both of us from 2022 to 2024, and we appreciate the patience of our advisors Prof. Claudia Equit, Prof. Lars Alberth, and Prof. Philipp Sandermann. Many more people helped us in various professional and personal situations, and since this chapter is about networks, we will mention more of them later in the text. We start our narrative early in that morning when news of the strike mobilized people across the whole country.

Staying in Kyiv after a full-scale invasion and experiencing evacuation to Berlin

On February 24, 2022, at 5.30 a.m., Tamara was awoken in her apartment in northwestern Kyiv by the sounds of missiles and explosions. Her friend, Ihor, called: full-scale war had started and she needed to decide what to do in the next hours and days. She had not prepared an evacuation backpack or a proper escape plan. She had neither a car nor a driver's license, so she could not leave Kyiv immediately like the thousands who ended up in gridlock on the roads and at the border crossings of neighboring European countries. Instead, Tamara went to the supermarket to buy extra food and started to prepare her apartment for a possible blockade of Kyiv. She decided to stay in her city.

Tetiana was sleeping and was awakened by Tamara's phone call and the words, "it has started." Her apartment in northern Kyiv was much closer to the fast-moving troops and probable attacks. It was also on the 21st floor, a height to which no water could be supplied without electricity, and among modern, multistoried caves of the 21st century. She had a small backpack with documents and a laptop not yet unpacked after a visit to her mother and sister the previous day. When Tamara said, "Come to my place where we can decide together; it is easier to get water from the well to the fifth floor," Tetiana had no hesitations. It took her 15 minutes from waking up to get the essentials into her small backpack and to leave her apartment without any clue whether she would ever return. Early that morning, it was clear that getting a taxi was impossible. Tetiana took a bus until it was stuck in a huge traffic jam, and then she walked. After three hours, she reached the Borshchahivka area of Kyiv and Tamara's apartment. They stayed in Kyiv for nine days, under missiles and sirens, hiding in Tamara's bathtub and covering themselves with a yoga mat.

On that first day, Tamara was supposed to teach her "Introduction to Gender Studies" course online throughout the whole day. Her students had a test to take because the following week was spring break. Tamara also had two big, nicely wrapped presents and plans to celebrate her friend Natalia's birthday in the evening

and meet another friend, Oksana, that Saturday. It took almost a year for Tamara to deliver these presents and meet her friends in Kyiv. Online teaching at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy was interrupted for more than a month.

The university president sent an email at six o'clock in the morning informing professors they should stop all studies at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The administration kept the faculty and students updated about the situation on an almost daily basis. They sent pictures from the university building because Kyiv-Mohyla Academy is in the historic city center, and, as we all have seen over these years, Russians bomb cultural heritage sites.

The immediate reaction of the academic community worldwide was extremely supportive for Tamara and Tetiana during those first nine days in Kyiv. International colleagues invited Tamara and Tetiana to join daily academic events about the war in Ukraine, but the two remained silent. They could not reflect and talk to the public while experiencing night after night of sleep deprivation, hiding from the shelling in a bathtub, and thinking all day long about the what-if of a mass rocket attack on Kyiv despite the millions of civilians still in the city. Colleagues from abroad were writing daily, asking whether Tamara and Tetiana were alive and uninjured and whether they intended to evacuate with invitations to universities in Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, and the United States.

But in the first days, it was not easy to evacuate from Kyiv. Trains were overcrowded, and the evacuation of women with children, the elderly, and people with disabilities was prioritized. Tamara and Tetiana were thinking that the best decision was to stay in Kyiv. They had enough food and water, the electricity and gas were functioning, and they, like so many people, were hoping that the nightmare would stop, the invaders would turn back, and their former lives would resume. As some friends suggested later, that reaction was a phase of "freezing up" when faced with a threat. Nevertheless, their closest friends and family were messaging daily to say that Tamara and Tetiana should evacuate as soon as possible and before it was too late. For the first time in her life, Tamara experienced problems with her heart and had panic attacks. Hiding

in the shelter almost half of the time to stay in Kyiv had become unbearable. Tamara and Tetiana decided to evacuate from Kyiv, first to western Ukraine and Poland, and then on to Berlin.

Early in the morning on March 5, after the curfew was lifted, they searched for taxi services from the Borshchahivka district of Kyiv to the Kyiv Passenger Railway Station. In peacetime, it usually took twenty minutes and cost around 150 UAH by taxi. But things had changed since February 24 such that Tamara and Tetiana were lucky to find one for only 800 UAH. They took the first available train to western Ukraine. There were even free seats in the carriage. The train was supposed to go to Ternopil, but later it changed direction and arrived in Kovel (Volyn oblast), Tamara's hometown and where her parents live. That same day, Tetiana's family—her mother, sister, brother-in-law, and 4-year-old niece—were driving to Zakarpattia, and by a lucky chance the evacuation train and Tetiana's family met in Zdolbuniv, in Rivne oblast. Tetiana did not know when she would see her family again, and she could not leave the train to hug them; the train was moving without any specified schedule, and passengers were afraid to get off at the stations because the stops lasted only a minute or two.

The two women spent a full day in Kovel to prepare for the longer trip abroad, and for Tamara to visit her 93-year-old grandmother, who had survived the Second World War. Due to health issues over the last months, Tamara's Granny could not appreciate that there was a full-scale invasion in Ukraine. Tamara managed to meet her, talk a bit, and even arranged a short video call with a cousin, Anna, from the United States. This was the last time Tamara saw her grandmother, who died a couple of weeks later. Tamara could not attend the funeral, but while taking the evacuation train from Kyiv to Kovel, Tamara remembered the story that her grandmother, Maria, shared about her experience of the Second World War. History repeats itself. Maria's story was also about taking a train but in different circumstances. Tamara told her story to a Ukrainian activist in Berlin, Oleksandra Bienert, who arranged the *I'm not a victim, I'm a survivor* photo exhibition (2022). Under Tamara's picture, Oleksandra wrote this text about her heroine:

> When I left Kyiv on the evacuation train, I had to think of my grandmother. She was 12 when she also rode through Ukraine on the evacuation train, back in the Second World War. That train was bombed. My grandma is now 93. She no longer understands what is happening. Maybe it's better that way. I was now afraid of being evacuated by train, and I had flashbacks to the 1940s in my head while we were being evacuated. Luckily, our train ran during the day and not at night.

In this book, other Ukrainian scholars who experienced evacuation (Yuliia Soroka, Kateryna Zarembo, and Inna Volosevych) also write about their experience of staying after the full-scale invasion and their subsequent evacuation and their doubts hopes. They use different ethnographic methods: a diary that was written during the first weeks of the occupation of Mariupol, participant observation, and autoethnography. Yuliia Bidenko, Kateryna Zarembo, and Inna Volosevych spent several months in Germany. Polina Stohnushko and Oleksandra Keudel are Ukrainian scholars and activists living in Germany. Other authors (Ivan Gomza, Mariia Shuvalova, Sergiy Gerasymchuk, Rostyslav Semkiv, and Mychailo Wynnyckyj) worked on their chapters from Ukraine.

Academic exile in Berlin: Networks and solidarity

Tamara and Tetiana considered such factors as relative closeness to Ukraine, professional connections (since one of the reasons to evacuate was to continue working in a physically safer place), and proximity to good friends in their discussions about where to move. Berlin was quite a conscious choice as a destination. Tamara's longtime friend from her university days, Andriy, was among those who called her during the first week after the invasion. Andriy talked to Tamara in a calm manner, offered to host her and Tetiana in his house near Berlin, and outlined a concrete plan of evacuation: reach Lublin, Poland from Kovel by bus, take a train through Poland (which was free of charge for Ukrainian refugees during those weeks), and arrive at the border with Germany, where he would pick them both up by car. His wife, Vira, was very friendly, and she helped Tamara and Tetiana find long-term accommodation in Berlin for the next months by connecting them with Mr. Matthias Vogelsang and his wife, Eniko, whose apartment in Berlin they have

been renting for almost two years at the time of writing. Vogelsang's family friend, Christiane Lehmann, helped Tamara and Tetiana to fill out all the documents to register in the city. Inna Melnykovska, an old friend, guided them through the labyrinth of German bureaucracy to obtain refugee status with a residence permit and open a bank account.

Many studies of migrants emphasize the crucial role of networks in choosing a destination country. For example, a relatively recent study of Syrian refugees in Lebanon shows that refugees chose the host location because they had family and friends there whom they believed would support their future integration (Bizri, 2017). Surveys conducted in 2022 to 2023 also indicate that Ukrainian refugees considered their preexisting networks in the host country when they decided where to flee. More than 340 percent of surveyed refugees had family member(s) or friends in the host country, and more than (Info Sapiens, 2023).

Tamara and Tetiana would like to mention many more people in their personal support networks: Katharina Bluhm, who kindly hosted them for free in her brother's apartment for three weeks before they found a long-term rental; Oleksandra Keudel, whose guest room, tea, and dinner (as well as her energy when discussing this book project) gave them an idea and inspiration for the further fight for Ukrainian studies in academia; Polina Stohnushko, their former student at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, who brought a laundry machine to their newly found apartment, installed it, and showed them many art spots in Berlin and actively participated in demonstrations in support of the arming of Ukraine and against Russian aggression and violence. These and other people were so open and supportive. They empowered Tamara and Tetiana and restored their strength after the evacuation and once they had realized that the full-scale war would continue. It is a marathon for all of us.

Tamara and Tetiana wanted to contribute to the resistance against the *russkiy mir* (Russian world) invading their country and to continue their fight in academia, so they joined a university they already knew. During conferences held at Freie Universität Berlin and other events, they had become acquainted with quite a few faculty members. Tetiana's scholarship came from Cluster of

Excellence SCRIPTS, and Tamara's from Osteuropa-Institut. Both scholarships were among the first for Scholars at Risk, a program for refugee scholars that provides short-term and immediate support for those who have had to flee from their home countries.

In March 2022, Amory Burchard from the major German newspaper *Tagesspiegel* wrote to Tetiana and Tamara and asked about an interview on "academic refuge from Ukraine in terms of short- and mid-term perspectives for scholars at risk in the current war—and, of course, about the situation in your institute in Kyiv and your personal situation." A colleague from Osteuropa-Institut, Mihai Varga, helped to arrange the meeting. The interview lasted more than two hours and resulted in a text entitled "Academic exile in Berlin: 'We come from a city that is being bombed'" (Burchard, 2022). This was the first public appeal from Tamara and Tetiana, a month after the start of full-scale war. The goal became clear—make Ukrainian studies more visible in Germany, and potentially across Europe and worldwide. The requests from German colleagues to bring more Ukrainians' voices into academia came from many institutions, including from Osteuropa-Institut and two of its professors, Susanne Strätling and Katharina Bluhm. Nor was the financial support limited to the scholarships from Scholars at Risk. Tetiana received and accepted an offer to teach one full semester as a temporary substitute for Prof. Bluhm during her sabbatical. Prof. Tetyana Zamostyan from Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg invited both Tamara and Tetiana to contribute to teaching German students topics related to contemporary Ukraine in spring and autumn of 2022. ZOiS and its director, Prof. Gwendolyn Sasse, initiated a series of Lectures on Ukraine from spring to summer 2022. Prof. Heiko Pleines launched *Ukrainian Digest* in 2023, and Tetiana joined the editorial team. There are many others. In the next part of this chapter, we provide more details about our vision for how Ukrainian studies can be supported further. Some steps are already taken, and much more is still to be done.

Mission Possible: The visibility of Ukrainian studies

Tamara articulated her experience as a refugee scholar for the first time in April 2022 when Stavroula Kousta, editor-in-chief of *Nature Human Behaviour*, wrote her an email with the subject line, "Invitation to contribute an opinion editorial." Her letter to Tamara explained:

> I am writing today to ask if you would be able to contribute a brief opinion editorial to *Nature Human Behaviour*, sharing your experience as a war refugee and the challenges (as well as your hopes) for Ukrainian women and Ukrainian scientists in the midst of the ongoing war. I realize that this is an extremely challenging time for you and that writing this piece may not be feasible. However, if you are able to contribute, your piece would be featured in a focus issue dedicated to the war in Ukraine that we will be publishing in early June.

Tamara used this opportunity to share her experience and to write about the full-scale invasion and the importance of Ukrainian studies for the Ukrainian peoples' resistance in this terrible war. Tamara finally found her voice, and she chose as title for her opinion piece, "As a refugee scholar, I want to make Ukrainian studies more visible" (Martsenyuk, 2022a). A number of longer papers explaining the situation with war in Ukraine followed (for example, Martsenyuk, 2022b; Martsenyuk, 2022c; Phillips & Martsenyuk, 2023).

Tamara is a member of the Public Council of the Inter-Factional Deputy Association "Equal Opportunities" and head of the Education Issues group, so she prepared a public statement that was shared worldwide on education and Ukrainian studies. The text for this statement was as follows as of March 2022:

> Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, our academic, research, and educational institutions have been forced to stop or suspend their activities. The educators, just as other citizens of Ukraine, both men and women, either joined the defense efforts or were forced to evacuate to either other regions of Ukraine or to other countries. The war caused the deaths of teachers and students, turned many of them into refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and destroyed university buildings (e.g., Karazin Kharkiv National University, Taras Shevchenko National University).

In parallel with the military battles and movements, the Russo-Ukrainian war is also being waged in science and education. The Russian government controls science and culture. It sees them as effective tools for, at first, the concocted "de-Banderization" and "denazification" of Ukraine, and, later, for the destruction of the Ukrainian nation. The Russian Union of Rectors issued a letter expressing support for the war and the actions of the Russian president.

The universities are used as a "soft power" to influence Western societies. In Western universities, studying post-Soviet societies is often reduced to studying Russian society and applying the results of these studies to other post-Soviet societies, including Ukrainian society. It is not by chance that the regional centers dedicated to research of our region are called, among other things, Centers of Russian, Eastern European, or Eurasian studies (for example, Stanford University Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies). The international community holds on to the idea that Slavic studies are inseparable from Russian-area studies, which enjoy the leading role in the discipline. Western universities have many connections with Russian universities and academic structures that actively promote a discourse that serves the Russian government.

From the first days of the war, the international academic, scientific, and educational community has tried to support Ukraine. Scholarship programs for professors, researchers, and students have been founded under slogans like "Stand with Ukraine" for those who find themselves in a dangerous situation (scholars at risk), which means they are forced to flee Ukraine because their cities and universities are being bombarded.

Yet, we cannot overlook the remarkable fact that some international programs and universities launched joint programs and scholarships for Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarussians. The victims who are suffering from the war, the professors and students of Ukraine, are thus placed in the same group as the academic community of the aggressor countries of Russia and Belarus. Is it rational to apply the same category to the consequences of the bombardment of cities, the massacres of civilian populations, the losses of homes, the injuries, etc., on the one hand, and complications to receiving cash due to sanctions on the other? Such an oversimplified view of the situation and the lack of will on the part of some international institutions and colleagues to clearly distinguish between the real victims of war and those who work in the institutions financed by aggressor countries is both scandalous and upsetting. Can we really talk about solidarity with Ukraine if international educational and scientific institutions act such that they effectively make their position neutral and lean toward the idea that the "academic world is outside the politics" rather than standing with Ukraine?

What would we instead deem an appropriate response from international academic structures to support Ukrainian science and education?

- Impose sanctions on Russian academic structures. These structures are supported and financed by the government, and, indeed, lobby for the interests of the Russian authorities.

- For the next 10 or so years, completely veto the studies, popularization, and spreading of the Russian culture (or whatever made-up "umbrellas" are used to this end). Both remove the word "Russian" from the titles of the studies and stop research and educational endeavors in this field outside the postcolonial context and without an emphasis on Russia's imperialist ideologies and practices.
- Support Ukrainian studies as a distinct field of regional studies (not as a component of Slavic or Eastern European studies). Such programs already exist in some Western Universities, for example Harvard's Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI). It is also important to allocate more resources to the study of Ukrainian language under such programs and in international universities in general.
- Support Ukrainian researchers, especially in the form of long-distance programs, because comparatively few of us have an opportunity to leave Ukraine and move to a Western university campus. For this reason, facilitation of nonresidential programs is particularly important. A positive example here could be the joint nonresidential fellowship program run by the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM, Vienna) and HURI.
- Support and develop Ukrainian international partnerships, research projects, magazines, books, articles, cultural and artistic projects, and educational initiatives.

The academic community of Ukraine, just like the rest of the country's citizens, struggles to improve the visibility of Ukrainian society and its achievements and participates in sharing truthful information about the Russo-Ukrainian war. For this reason, it is important for our voices to be heard.

Our hopes and expectations are that this present statement and the initiatives outlined in it will be supported by the progressive universities of the world and by the academic community.

Much has changed since March 2022. The interest in Ukrainian studies has increased a lot, especially in Germany. In the 2022–23 academic year, Tamara and Tetiana participated in a number of conferences on Ukraine, gave interviews for scholars and journalists, presented their research on different public lectures, and even taught a few courses on Ukraine in various German universities. In March 2022, Claudia Equit, Lars Alberth, and Philipp Sandermann from the Faculty of Education at the Institute of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at Leuphana Universität Lüneburg applied for a fellowship for Ukrainian scholars from the Ministry of Education and Culture of Lower Saxony (MWK) for Tamara and Tetiana for twelve months. This fellowship was prolonged (in Tetiana's case, postponed due to her teaching at FU Berlin). It was very helpful to have stability at this time.

In autumn 2022, the German Sociological Association organized a special panel, "Laboratory of the European Nation Becoming: Sociological lessons from Ukraine," during their 41st Congress in Bielefeld. Tamara and Tetiana participated and presented their papers together with colleagues Olena Strelnyk, Viktoriya Sereda, and Oksana Mikheeva, among others. Tamara presented the results of her research on Ukrainian women's resistance in the war at the Käte Hamburger Dialogue on the war in Ukraine organized by the Centre for Global Cooperation Research at the Institute for Development and Peace at University of Duisburg-Essen, at the Aleksanteri Conference in 2022, "The New Era of Insecurity," held in Helsinki, at the conference on "War and the Future of Ukraine" at St. Antony's College of Oxford University, and at many other events. She also gave a guest course for master's students on "Constructing Gender in Ukrainian Society" at Magdeburg University.

Tetiana developed and taught courses on "Contemporary Ukrainian Society" at Leuphana University Lüneburg and at FU Berlin, and she discussed her research of social capital and networks as a basis of resistance and resilience at Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and at other academic gatherings. Area studies centers also organized panel discussions, like the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen's "Ukrainian studies in times of war: Ways forward" gathering in autumn 2022. Berlin City Hall and the Frankfurt Book Fair organized events to raise awareness about women and war in Ukraine. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Forum Transregionale organized a special panel on Scholars at Risk and the situation with refugee academics, where Tetiana shared her experience and reflections on the difficulties of new challenges and how to remain productive (and even become more productive and engaged as a scholar and as a citizen). Ukrainian and German universities started to develop more cooperation, like the online project #WartimeLectures series established by Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the University of Giessen (available as a playlist at https://www.youtube.com/@Kyiv-Mohyla), for which Tamara gave the lecture "Girls, let's close the sky" (https://youtu.be/Gh6zDg6D66s) on women's resistance in Russia's war in Ukraine.

In the authors' professional sociological sphere, it became possible to exercise agency via editorial experience. The editors of *European Society Journal* (the flagship journal of the European Sociological Association), Alexi Gugushvili, Evelyn Ersanilli, and Patrick Präg, proposed in early March 2022: "As a response to the Russian invasion, we are considering setting-up a special issue on Ukraine. The aim would be to open up sociological knowledge about Ukraine to readers in Europe and beyond." The special issue, "Understanding Ukrainian Society: Before and After the Russian Invasion," is in the process of collecting papers in social sciences from Ukrainian and international scholars since autumn 2022.

It makes the authors feel better when they observe a growing interest in Ukraine among German scholars and research centers and special funding for academic works like books, articles, papers, and art projects to make Ukraine more visible and for German people and people in other countries to understand Ukraine better. The authors of the other chapters are eager to open Ukraine to the international community. They tell their personal stories and explain their research results and projects to increase the visibility of Ukrainian studies.

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