

MILITARY DIARIES

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WOMAN OF WAR

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Preface

War ... Woman ... It should seem, these two are incompatible manifestations of human existence. War is often believed to have an unwomanly face. Not really! It does have a woman's face. In most languages it is conventionally regarded as female. The war and the woman are closely intertwined. This concerns women's rights in the military environment and the gender policy in the armed forces. It is a pressing, relevant, and highly charged problem on the agenda of the present-day global humanitarian space.

In Ukraine, the relationship between war and women has been counting for centuries. Has anyone studied the history of women in the war? Not yet. None special work has been published. However, this history exists and must be written to be preserved.

In the Trypillian epoch, husbandmen of Rus-Ukraine defended their land, with women firmly holding weapons and bringing to men new spears and swords instead of broken ones. At the time of Kyivan Rus, Duchess Olha led her host in the battles to protect the integrity of the state and the strength of Kyiv from pretensions of feudal dukes. In the era of Hetmanate, there were no women in Zaporozhian Sich. However, they were preparing strategic provisions for the Cossacks. Women played a very important role in World Wars I and II. Then they became a real military

unit bearing arms against enemies and saving lives of soldiers.

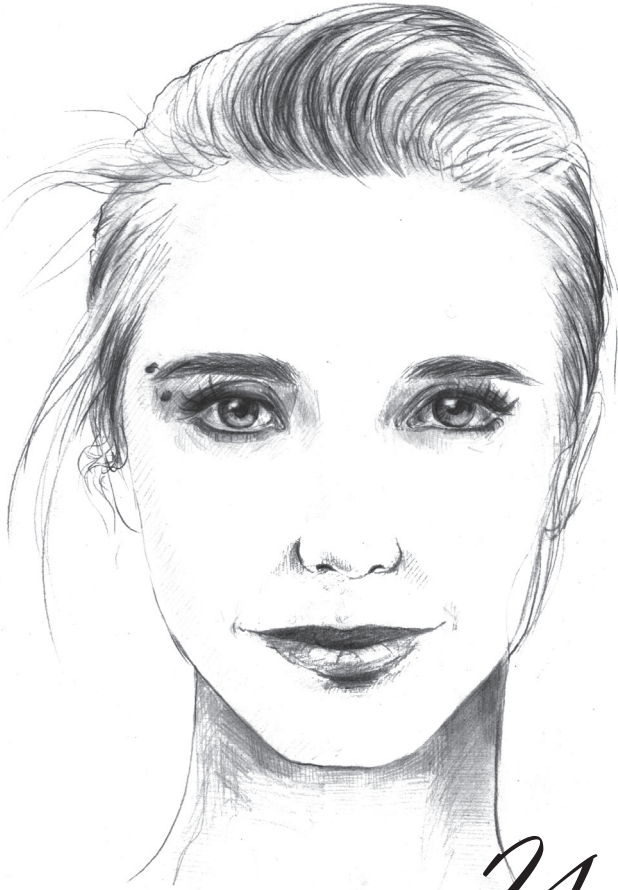
In the Ukrainian-Russian war, the woman has taken combat positions boldly declaring herself a volunteer, a doctor, and a soldier. And here an acute problem of equal rights of women and men in the war arose. They have equal rights to death. Consequently, all other rights must be equalized too.

This book is the first attempt to write a page of the history of Ukrainian women in war. These are reflections about how, at the beginning of the 21st century, Ukrainian hero women are defending the independence and integrity of Ukraine and proving their natural right to be a guardian of their Homeland, on a par with men. This is an important step towards levelling the rights of military men and women soldiers.

The book contains 25 stories. Each of them is based on real-life events and tells about real-life people. Their stories have been written in the process and as a result of communication with the Heroines.

The world has not known this kind of stories. This is the Ukrainian encounter experienced in a womanly way. It is full of tragedy and heroism. Ukraine tells about this experience to the world through women, the fighters for the independence and integrity of Ukraine and the guardians of their land, who are ready to render their life for Ukraine at any moment.

Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes!



Yana

*To secure peace is to prepare for war.
To survive war is to be able to provide
aid to oneself. To save lives of our
warriors is to join the Hospitallers.*
Yana Zinkevych

From an early age she has been standing for the truth and justice. She is intelligent and beautiful. She was amongst the first volunteers who went to the East of Ukraine to defend the independence and territorial integrity of our state, to help Ukrainian servicemen fight the enemy. She is slim and graceful. Calm and cool-headed. Reserved and determined. Responsible and sometimes tough. She wields all kinds of weapons. A combat veteran. The founder and commander of *Hospitallers* medical battalion of the Ukrainian Volunteer Army. A gifted chieftain with inborn aptitude to leadership. She has survived in spite of severe injuries after a terrible car crash. The girl with a broken life, a split spine, and a dire prognosis of being disabled for the rest of her life. The one who received a doctors' sentence, "people do not live with such a diagnosis" and "barren for the entire life". The one who never gives up and believes in miracles. The young mother of a little angel. The one who comes out victor. The one who acts instead of daydreaming. Her name is Yana. She is 22 years old.

From a young age, Yana has been wishing for becoming a doctor. She wants to save people's lives. While studying in the upper secondary school, the girl was viewing herself as a physician and preparing to enter the university. Unfortunately, it turned out that the knowledge itself was not enough. Yana and her family refused to give a bribe. So, she entered the biological faculty and had to abandon the dream of childhood.

There is an opinion, for any wish to come true, you must let it go. That's the case of Yana's dream. Although from the first attempt, Yana has not yet become a doctor, she began to save lives without medical education. As soon as the war in the Eastern Ukraine began, Yana realized she could not sit idle. Nor remain silent. She had to be there, in the field. Everyone is guided by one's conscience. Yana had no choice but to go to the front line as volunteer. Having passed a short-term training and adaptation, she started her service at zero positions. Make every effort. Do one's best. At the front, Yana assumed responsibility to serve as chief of the Medical Service of the Right Sector.

Yana survived her first real clash near the village of Karlivka, Donetsk Oblast. A short battle that took count of casualties. The volunteers did not understand what a hell was going on. There was a true war they had known only from books and movies. The situation was unclear, and death did not wait. As the number of casualties was going up, Yana came to the conclusion she needed to take urgent decisions regarding the organization of medical assistance for the wounded soldiers. Then Yana started her path towards the creation of *Hospitallers* battalion. She had cared of hundreds people. Wounded, dead. Organization of funerals. The hardest task was to give killed in action notices to their relatives. The emotions were overwhelming, but she shrugged them off as they drew her away from work.

Live each day as if it is your last. Do not waste time on unnecessary and unimportant things. Yana believes and does so. Clear instructions, planned actions, steel nerves, detailed reports, and search for opportunities and money for the sole purpose of saving lives of Ukrainian servicemen.

Platoon, squadron, battalion. More than two and a half thousand lives that have been saved in the three years. Military servicemen, physicians, paramedics, and logistics

professionals — more than five hundred people have passed through the *Hospitallers* battalion. People with big hearts who are risking their own lives for others. Life for the sake of life. Telling about *Hospitallers*, Yana starts talking louder. She speaks with pride and respect in her voice. People who, at their own will, have arisen for their country cannot but inspire. The so-called *Hospitallers'* trainings have long been gaining popularity and fame among the fighters and the civilian population due to professional delivery of knowledge and friendly atmosphere.

“The Hospitallers’ training session of May was completed. Behind, there were lectures, trainings, combat simulations, bruises, a little bit of blood, three teams, a broken finger, faith in one’s own strength, friendship, paramedicine... And what’s ahead is up to the commander Yana. Those trainees who go for their first rotation as assistants to experienced Hospitaller officers are gently called ‘kittens’. They are the desperate people who will test their fighting spirit in real war. If this life-course trial is passed successfully, one can think of membership in the Hospitallers family, while the others will take home a useful knowledge and be able to use it in the case of emergency”, Hospitallers members of Ukrainian Volunteer Army report.

The *Hospitallers* are called guardian angels. They are always busy in the hottest spots of the front. They have left home, family, and comfort for the sake of permanent residence in the battlefield. Instead of living a normal life, they put themselves under a constant danger and bombardments. Instead of friends they have to wrap KIAs (*killed in action*) in bags for corpses. Why have they done so? They could be sitting in peaceful Kyiv or in any other safe city. They could go to a well-paid business, wake up on alarm ring, and plan weekends. They could take a flight to Vienna for a cup of coffee and feel like European citizens. However, they have not done so. Those who call themselves *Hospitallers* have other priorities. They

have boundless open hearts tooled for mercy. Life according to conscience and realization of the fact that they are doing a really great business are their only benefit.

Morning in Avdiivka started with a massive artillery shelling. Cluster bombs. Formation of new positions. Ruins and destroyed military hardware. The abandoned cemetery in the middle of the ruins of the old life. The war had lasted for several years and come off as shaggy dog story. In peaceful Kyiv, it did not hurt anybody any longer. The *Hospitallers* were the only wakeful and restless. They continued doing their work every day. Early head checks. Senior officers of groups reported on the situation. Gave overnight reports. They wished to each other all the best, but were ready for the worst. Received routine messages.

“We have a badly injured. Abdominal wound, a fragment in stomach, hemopneumotorex, crushed collarbone. He is very critical. The operation was performed by the chief surgeon of the Ministry of Defense and his ATO counterpart. Afterwards, the Avdiivka doctors sewed up, and we assisted with bandages and treatment of wounds.”

“Tank fire! All get out from there! It does not end! Hmm ... what a bloody hell day...”

“We have one killed in action. He had no chance. He arrived in a state of clinical death, but for almost thirty minutes we were carrying out resuscitation procedures directly in the corridor. A large-caliber bullet punched the armor, even damaged his gun.”

These are the words of those who call themselves *Hospitallers*.

In war, life and death go beside each other, sometimes holding hands. Every *Hospitaller* understands this. With each lost life a bit of *Hospitallers* heart disappears. And with every salvaged wounded soldier, it revives and becomes bigger. Being a *Hospitaller* is more than being a mere physician or