

UDC 378.4.09:355.01(477)

*Olha Tarasenko,
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3220-3510*

Introductory word

The Ukrainian section of the fifth issue of the online journal “Young Scholars Grinchenko – Seton International Journal” includes a part of the oral online testimonies of Ukrainian students of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University to American students and teachers of Seton Hall University during the virtual meeting on October 31, 2023 “Stand with Ukraine! The experience of survival of Ukrainian Students during the russian-Ukrainian War (2014 – 2023)”.

Stand With Ukraine!

Досвід виживання українських студентів під час російсько-української війни (2014-2023...)

The experience of survival of Ukrainian students during the russian-Ukrainian war (2014-2023...)

ВІРТУАЛЬНИЙ МІСТ
між студентами та викладачами
Університету Сетон Хол та Київського
університету імені Бориса Грінченка
31 жовтня 2023 р., 17:00

VIRTUAL BRIDGE
between students and lecturers
of the Seton Hall University and
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University
October 31, 2023, 11:00 a.m

КІЇВСЬКИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ
ІМЕНІ БОРИСА ГРІНЧЕНКА

SETON HALL
UNIVERSITY

In their speeches, Ukrainian students shared with their American peers their experience of surviving the first days, weeks and months of the full-scale invasion of the russian occupier on Ukrainian land on February 24, 2022 during the russian-Ukrainian war of 2014 – 2024 and overcoming its terrible trials, active volunteering activities for the sake of victory of Ukraine, as well as their dreams and visions of the future of Ukraine.

Through presentations and lively dialog, the students talked about our country, its identity, aspirations and values of Ukrainians. They showed the devastating consequences of the russian

invasion for the Ukrainian cities of Kyiv, Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol, Berdiansk, Kakhovka, Nova Kakhovka, Volnovakha, Nikopol, etc.

Ukrainian students introduced their American peers to information about Ukraine, shared their personal testimonies of life during the Russian aggression, and talked about personal and social transformations in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian section of the fifth issue of the online journal *Young Scholars Grinchenko – Seton International Journal* opens with a welcome speech by *Olena Aleksandrova*, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. She noticed that international cooperation between Seton Hall University and Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University has been going on for 16 years. She thanked American colleagues for their support of Ukraine and expressed hope for further productive cooperation.

Anna Hedo, Head of the History of Ukraine Department at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, notified that Ukrainian authors of oral testimonies are living in the epicenter of military events today when shelling, sirens, panic, and fear are heard, at the same time, they all study at schools and universities. She emphasized that Ukrainian authors are fighting, burying friends, waiting for their loved ones, and raising funds to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine financially. Anna Hedo reported that the Ukrainian authors of the oral testimonies know what a rocket that hits a house is and what it is like to break through enemy checkpoints. She accentuated that Ukrainians are strong, fearless, and courageous, do not sit idly by, but look for any opportunity to bring Victory closer and talk to the world. Anna Hedo highlighted that Ukrainian authors of oral testimonies, like all Ukrainians, believe that the world cannot remain indifferent, that we want to be heard, and that we know how to fight for our freedom because we have our land, our history, our culture – these are our greatest treasures that we will not give away to anyone.

In the photos, the Ukrainian authors demonstrated the flourishing Ukrainian cities before the war and the terrible destruction caused by the targeted shelling of peaceful Ukrainian cities and people with rockets and bombs, which was deliberately done and continues to be done in the 21st century by the Russian Federation – the aggressor state – terrorist – occupier, and invader.

Dmytro Kolomiets, a first-year postgraduate student at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, in his note “Kyiv in the first days of full-scale Russian invasion of 2022” spoke about his impressions of what he saw and felt during the first year of the full-scale invasion of Ukrainian land by Russian invaders (from the end of February 2022 to the end of 2022). He wanted to convey that we, Ukrainians, continue to live and fight, that 2022 was the longest year for us, Ukrainians, because on February 24, the usual life of the whole country ended (or rather stopped) due to the full-scale invasion. Dmytro shared six of his photographs taken in Kyiv during the war in the spring and winter of 2022. With his photos, he wants to broaden the understanding of this war through the personal experience of an ordinary Ukrainian. Dmytro Kolomiets emphasizes: “Do not give up on us. We will live and fight. We live in a very difficult time for our country. But we live, study, work, volunteer, and help the Armed Forces of Ukraine”.

Maryna Halushko, a second-year master’s student of the History and Archeology program at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, said about life on the outskirts of Kyiv in the first months of the full-scale Russian

invasion of 2022. She lives on the outskirts of Kyiv, 15 km from Bucha and Irpin. She noted that February 24, 2022, would remain in her memory for the rest of her life as a huge horror that terrorist russia brought to our Ukrainian land. She told about the first hours of the full-scale invasion, the first air raids, the first explosions, the screams and tears of people who did not understand what to do next, the chaos. Maryna shared photos of peaceful Bucha and Irpin before the russian invasion of Ukraine. The Armed Forces of Ukraine resisted the russian offensive in the western outskirts of Kyiv – Irpin, Bucha, and Hostomel, which were the most dangerous places in the Battle for Kyiv in the Kyiv region.

Maryna recalled that after Ukrainian troops regained control of Bucha, reports of russian military atrocities shocked the world. She mentioned that today the whole world knows that russian troops carried out a massacre of civilians in Bucha, known as the Bucha massacre. The Bucha massacre, or Bucha genocide, was a targeted brutal massacre by russian armed forces in Bucha of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war, accompanied by abductions, torture, rape, including of children, and looting. Maryna said that shells exploded twice within 500 meters of her. She recollected that the news from Bucha, Irpin, and Mariupol made her blood run cold, and she realized that this is the reality of every Ukrainian in the 21st century. Marina is confident that Ukraine will win. However, the only thing we will not be able to fix is the lost lives of people whose names will forever remain in the history of our Homeland – Ukraine. Her aspirations are the same as those of all Ukrainians – Ukraine’s complete Victory over the terrorist country.

Olha Sarayeva, an Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophical Sciences and History of Ukraine at Pryazovsky State Technical University (moved from Mariupol to Dnipro), Deputy Director of Educational Work at the Scientific Educational Institute of Modern Technologies, and her daughter *Maria Sarayeva*, a 10th-grade student of the Mariupol City Lyceum (moved to Kyiv) spoke about their native Mariupol as the heart of fire and hope in a brutal war.

They described the terrible first days, weeks and months without food, water, heating, gas and electricity, under constant shelling and bombardment by russian troops. They hid in the basement. They drew a prayer and a cross, and prayed every time the explosions were unbearable.

Andriy Kozhushyna, a second-year student majoring in Social Work at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and a fourth-year student majoring in Heat Power Engineering at the Scientific and Educational Institute of Modern Technologies of Priazovsky State Technical University, told about his native Mariupol under russian occupation. Andriy shared information and photos of his beautiful hometown of Mariupol before the war and the terrible testimony of the complete destruction of Mariupol during the russian-Ukrainian war of 2014 – 2024.

Andriy summarized that the full-scale invasion of the russian army, which Mariupol felt first and withstood to the last, brought severe suffering and death to tens of thousands of civilians in Mariupol, the destruction of 90% of the city’s infrastructure and other extremely pressing problems that are very much felt now under occupation. He indicated that all the historical and cultural buildings that were a value of Mariupol were destroyed by the russian occupiers. Andriy emphasizes that Mariupol is Ukraine. He dreams of returning to the liberated Mariupol.

Polina Ishchenko, a second-year master’s student majoring in History and Archeology at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, spoke about the first days of the full-scale war in the Kherson region, in her hometown of Nova Kakhovka.

She shared photos of the beautiful Nova Kakhovka before the occupation by Russian troops and told about her life during several months under occupation. Polina informed about several large rallies at the beginning of the occupation, when almost the entire city came out with flags and slogans “Nova Kakhovka is Ukraine”. The behavior of the residents of Nova Kakhovka unpleasantly surprised the Russian military, who dispersed the first such rally with smoke bombs, and several people were injured.

She noted that her hometown had turned into a deserted wasteland. Many people began to leave because of moral pressure from the Russians and fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones. She and her mother decided to leave Nova Kakhovka for Odesa. They chose the route Kherson – Beryslav – Davydiv Brid – Bashtanka – Mykolaiv – Odesa. She mentioned how painful it was for her to leave her hometown. On the way to Kherson, they saw the consequences of the war – destroyed buildings, burnt vehicles, and military checkpoints. It was very painful to see all this. They passed about 40 Russian military checkpoints that stopped them for inspection. Polina recollected the time when they reached the first Ukrainian checkpoint and saw the Ukrainian blue and yellow flag. She was crying. She felt a sense of freedom that she had never experienced before. Polina left a piece of her heart in Nova Kakhovka. She will return to free Nova Kakhovka after our Victory, because Nova Kakhovka is Ukraine.

Kateryna Yaniuk, a first-year student majoring in Law at the Faculty of Law and International Relations of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, told us how quickly her hometown of Kakhovka, located on the left bank of the Kakhovka Reservoir along the Dnipro River, above the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant, was occupied. She recalled that the beginning of the occupation was an extremely difficult period, with no food or medicine available. She noted that from March 6 to April 3, three anti-occupation rallies “Kakhovka is Ukraine” were held in Kakhovka.

She stressed that on June 6, 2023, the largest and most terrible environmental disaster of the entire war occurred – an explosion at the Kakhovka dam of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. The Kakhovka HPP was blown up by the Russian occupiers on June 6, 2023. It is not subject to restoration. The direct damage from the explosion at the Kakhovka HPP exceeds \$2 billion. Kateryna is waiting for the de-occupation, when the Ukrainian flag will fly all over the Ukrainian land. She is looking forward to the day when she can return to Kakhovka.

Maria Klymenko, a first-year student majoring in Law at the Faculty of Law and International Relations of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, spoke about the hard life of Nikopol residents during daily artillery shelling. It is horrifying to realize that this young 18-year-old girl explains so professionally that artillery shelling is one of the most dangerous types of fire during military conflicts, which can cause a large number of accidental casualties among the population (missile launches that reach their targets in a few seconds). According to her, a person can learn about the beginning of shelling by hearing the distant sounds of shots, rumbling, and flares of rockets. If you hear the whistle of a projectile, after 2-3 seconds there will be an explosion, you need to fall to the ground immediately. Her hometown Nikopol is located on the banks of the Kakhovka Reservoir of the Dnipro River, which is almost dry near Nikopol after the Russians blew up the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant dam on June 6, 2023.

Maria informed that Nikopol is located 5 km from the Dnipro coast and Enerhodar, occupied on March 4, 2022, from where Russian terrorists conduct massive artillery shelling of

Nikopol and its coastal areas on a daily basis. Nikopol is not occupied. Enerhodar is home to the largest Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine and Europe. Maria indicated that almost all Nikopol residents can see the plant on the street, as it is located 5-7 km from the city and from there you can always see the enemy preparing artillery and shelling Nikopol. The shelling is quite brutal, indiscriminate, flying over residential areas and any objects. Nikopol is in mortal danger every day. One day Nikopol may become uninhabitable. Nikopol would be the first town that, God forbid, would receive a large layer of nuclear radiation in the event of an explosion at the ZNPP. Maria aspires to become a professional lawyer to defend the laws of the people and help rebuild Ukraine after the war. She urges us to study hard for the sake of our future and the future of Ukraine, which will certainly defeat evil. She will do everything in her power to keep her hometown in the center of people's attention.

Kateryna Vetoshko, a first-year student majoring in Law at the Faculty of Law and International Relations of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, told about her hometown of Volnovakha during the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014 – 2024. Volnovakha is located in the south of Donetsk region. It is a railway junction on the Mariupol-Donetsk and Mariupol-Zaporizhzhia lines. Volnovakha, like many other settlements in Ukraine, became a victim of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which led to significant changes in the lives of the local population. Volnovakha was located close to the border with the occupied territories and became a strategically important point in the war. On May 22, 2014, the battle near Volnovakha became the bloodiest in the history of the modern Ukrainian army. DPR militants tried to capture the town. Terrorists resorted to provocations, blocked roads, and used small arms, grenade launchers, and machine guns. Kateryna witnessed panic, fear and anxiety among the civilian population. On January 13, 2015, a terrible terrorist attack took place in Volnovakha during the artillery shelling by the occupation forces of the Russian Federation. The artillery shelling was classified as a terrorist attack due to the gravity of the crime, as the attack was directed against civilians. Following the tragedy, the "I am Volnovakha" campaign was launched on social media, uniting people and triggering peaceful actions across Ukraine. On February 24, 2022, fierce battles for control of Volnovakha began. Kateryna witnessed the beginning of a full-scale military invasion of the enemy and went through severe trials. Volnovakha is almost destroyed (90%). Kateryna described the first terrible five days of being in the epicenter of the fighting in Volnovakha with her family. She loves her hometown of Volnovakha very much. She wants to return home. She dreams of rebuilding Volnovakha after our Victory. She believes that Volnovakha will become an even more beautiful and prosperous town.

Yesenia Gnatenko, a first-year student majoring in Law at the Faculty of Law and International Relations of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, spoke about the daily life of Berdiansk residents under Russian occupation. Her life under occupation was a lack of food, light, water, gas, communication, and Ukrainian news. It was a time when Berdiansk residents were just surviving. Since February 27, 2022, Berdiansk has been under Russian military occupation, the city was taken without a fight. Yesenia recalled how a convoy of military equipment of the Russian occupiers passed by her window. The letter "Z" was written everywhere on this military equipment. The occupiers received information about every resident of the city. Persecution of people began. They were especially looking for the military. She said that the occupiers came to the apartments and broke down the doors if they were not allowed in, searched through personal belongings, stole equipment and jewelry, and tortured people. They did not care if you were a woman or a man, a child or an elderly person. For a long time, she was afraid to go

out alone because there had been repeated cases of rape of girls. Together with her family, she participated in anti-russian rallies several times. She is so proud of the Ukrainian people who stood unarmed in front of soldiers with machine guns. The rallies stopped when russian riot police arrived in Berdiansk, as people were beaten right in the center of the city, and the first activists were kidnapped and tortured.

Yesenia honored the memory of teenage heroes Tigran Hovhannisyán and Mykyta Khanganov, who were partisans in occupied Berdiansk. On June 24, 2023, these heroes shot a russian soldier and a police officer. After the shootout, these 16-year-old boys died. The last words of Nikita and Tigran were “Glory to Ukraine!”.

Yesenia spent two months under occupation at her home in Berdiansk. She told that the decision to leave Berdiansk could have cost one’s life. The nearest unoccupied city was Zaporizhzhia. In order to leave Berdiansk for Zaporizhzhia, it was necessary to pass through 14 russian checkpoints. Before the war, the road to Zaporizhzhia took 3-4 hours, but during the war – at least 8 hours, and people had to spend the night in the field for several days. She mentioned that the road from Berdiansk to Zaporizhzhia was in a terrible state, torn up by mines, with burnt tanks on the roadsides, shelled houses, broken fences, looted shops, and black smoke from rocket attacks. Loud explosions accompanied them all the way. Yesenia loves her native Berdiansk very much. She believes in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. She will never allow her Ukrainian Berdiansk to remain in the hands of a terrorist country, an aggressor country, an occupying country, russia. She wants to make this world a fairer place. Yesenia wants our Ukraine to become a global example of a state governed by the rule of law.

Polina Derkach, a first-year master’s student of the History and Archeology program at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, noted that the war affected everyone. She lives in Novomoskovsk, Dnipro region. She is 22 years old. She focused attention on that she was only 12 years old in 2014, when the russian agresors invaded eastern Ukraine. When russia’s full-scale invasion – the full-scale war in Ukraine – began, she was 19 years old. Thus, 10 years of her life, almost half of her life, she has lived in war. She is well aware that the war has affected everyone, and she feels that she is changing as well. Polina spoke about Nikopol, where her relatives live. She shared photos of Nikopol before the war and the terrible ruins of the town now. 800 residential buildings and more than 5000 private houses in Nikopol were damaged by russian shelling. Polina remarked that the russian occupiers are destroying Nikopol like everything else. They kill people, destroy cities, and rewrite history to destroy the truth. She says the worst thing is when you hear something flying and you cannot do anything but listen. Because in all the cities, towns and villages of Ukraine, we are not safe anywhere.

Polina stressed that living in Ukraine during the war is very-very scary, that every day Ukrainians live in danger, no one knows what the new day will bring and whether the night will be calm, without shelling, that living in this state is very exhausting. Nevertheless, we fight because we know that we live on our native land and have the right to live. She accentuated that throughout their history, Ukrainians have been fighting for their existence and have always proved that they are worth it. But now we want the world to remember us. We want to be understood and supported. Ukrainians want to have their own free and independent state and a peaceful sky above their heads, where civilian airplanes fly instead of missiles. Polina is very grateful that people remember us.

Sometimes it seems that the world is tired of war. She can understand this. Because in Ukraine we are also tired of bad news, but this is our reality. We just need to fight and move on. Polina asked us not to forget that Russia is a terrorist state.

Olena Kazymirenko, who teaches professional disciplines for students majoring in Graphic Design at the Universum College of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, shared the reflection of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the projects of students majoring in Graphic Design at the Universum College. She noted that artists and designers leave behind an emotional memory that is preserved in their works, and that young designers are worried about the future, because it is on their shoulders to rebuild the country, its movement towards a better life, and the creation of high-quality social conditions for everyone.

Oleksandr Bon, an Associate Professor of the History of Ukraine Department at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, told how the war began for his family and how the war affected his family. He emphasized that war has various dimensions, and each of them is different, painful and bitter.

Ruslan Kutsyk, an Associate Professor of the History of Ukraine Department at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, recalled the first days of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine and the tense atmosphere that prevailed in Kyiv. He mentioned how he and his friends left Kyiv for the western regions of Ukraine, where his parents live.

Students at the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University *Pavlo Zhuravsky*, *Kristina Hidzheletska*, *Victoria Kachanovska*, *Ruslana Temnyk* together with their advisor *Maria Prokopchuk*, an Associate Professor of the Department of English Language and Communication, Deputy Dean, told about the life of the Faculty during the war.

Pavlo Zhuravsky, a first-year student at the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology, majoring in English Language and Literature, of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, and his advisor *Maria Prokopchuk* shared how the Faculty's Student Government Council overcame the trials of war, created and held various events for students.

Khrystyna Hidzheletska, a third-year student at the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology, majoring in English Language and Literature, of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, together with her advisor *Maria Prokopchuk*, said how *Janusz Korczak's* experience can be used to survive the war in modern conditions.

Victoria Kachanovska, a second-year student at the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology, majoring in French Language and Literature, of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, and her supervisor *Maria Prokopchuk*, spoke about the practical aspect of the coordinator's work during the war.

Ruslana Temnyk, third-year student at the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology, majoring in Translation, of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, and her supervisor *Maria Prokopchuk*, noted the experience of Ukrainian youth emigration to Europe.

Ukrainian students are our children. Children of war. They all grew up and became adults so quickly. They can professionally explain things that their peers will never know or understand. Ukrainian students are children living in Ukraine and fighting for its independent future.

Honestly, it was hard for me to prepare this fifth issue of the online journal “Young Scholars Grinchenko – Seton International Journal”, because it is dedicated to Ukrainian children in war, their oral testimonies about life in war in the 21st century.

Polina Derkach noted that she is only 22 years old. In 2014, she was only 12 years old when Russian aggressors invaded eastern Ukraine. She lived in the war for 10 years of her life – almost half of her life, like her entire generation, unfortunately.

Our students, our children. We want to create the best conditions for them to live and study. However, their Motherland – Ukraine is at war.

Dmytro Kolomiets emphasized: “Do not give up on us. We will live and fight. We live in a very difficult time for our country. But we live, study, work, volunteer, help the Armed Forces of Ukraine”.

We believe in Ukraine! We believe in the Armed Forces of Ukraine! We believe in our Victory! With these sacred prayers, we, Ukrainians, breathe, live, and fight for our future Victory, each in his place. We strive to restore our Motherland after our Victory.

Stand with Ukraine! Stay with Ukraine! Support Ukraine! Help Ukraine! Together we will win! Glory to Ukraine!