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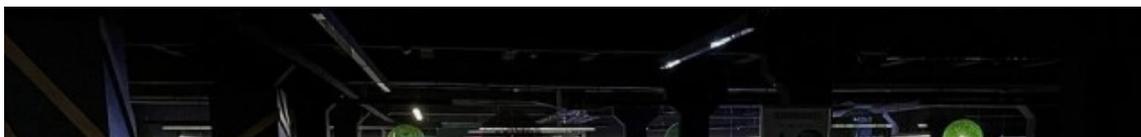
Ukraine War Day #277: Apocalypse Tonight!

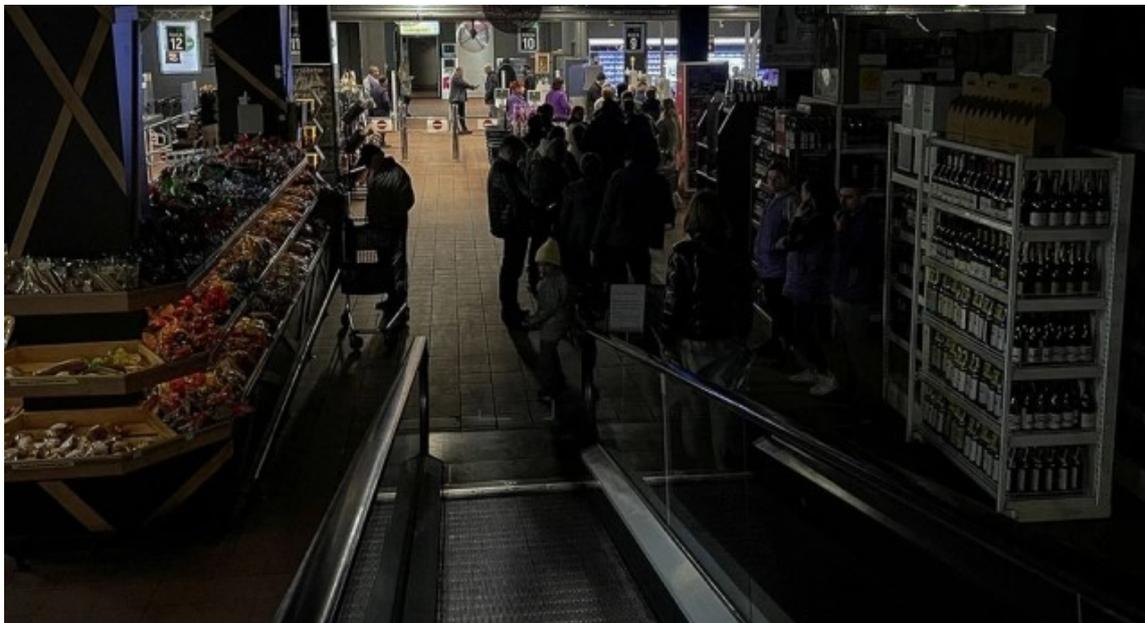
Posted on

10–13 minutes

Dear Readers:

[This piece](#), by reporter Alexander Boyko (Title: **Apocalypse In the Dark**), paints a very bleak picture of today's wartime Ukraine, and how much ordinary people are suffering. If, during the years 2014-22 only the residents of the Donbass endured such dangers and deprivations, now everybody has to share in the suffering, even in previously privileged places such as Lvov. Granted, this is a piece of propaganda. Not the *lying* kind of propaganda, the facts presented are all true. But perhaps the type of propaganda where all is made to seem much more desperate and on a much broader scale... For example, I could pick up a newspaper from my own town and become convinced that it is much too dangerous to walk out into the street, due to the current crime wave. I would be murdered or kidnapped the moment I set foot on the street. And yet, most likely, I could stroll down to the corner store and back, without incident. Perhaps it is that way for many, if not most ordinary Ukrainians as well. And yet I am sure that Boyko is not exaggerating by very much....





Customers in cities like Kiev and Lvov have gotten accustomed to shopping in the dark.

Boyko: Life in the Ukraine is becoming ever more interesting. Either they send you directly to the front; or they kill you or kidnap you right out on the street. Marauders are ransacking abandoned flats, which used to have alarm systems installed. On the dark city streets pedestrians are mugged and murdered, foreigners are at great risk of being kidnapped for ransom. While municipal authorities are pondering how to plan for long-term outages of electricity and heat, the residents are asking themselves: Are there going to be pogroms?

The Ukrainian public are already involved in discussions of the type: If our supermarkets in Kiev and Lvov should be looted by marauders, then what kind of stuff should we grab first? People are advised to go for the cigarettes and *samogon* [craft, or home-made booze], since those items can always be exchanged for other products. Also moist towelettes, with which many Ukrainians have become accustomed to cleaning themselves [in the absence of running water]. A mere 10 towelettes is enough to clean one's entire body, although some people have learned to do it with only five. For a home-made

toilet [in the absence of flushing water], people recommend taking kitchen-size garbage bags. It is also recommended to grab candles and batteries, and to keep at home enough water to last for 5 days. One may use one's bathtub and sink to hold the spare water; or perhaps even an aquarium tank, if one is handy.

Collections From the Third Reich

Boyko: I know a guy who lives in Kiev, let's call him Sergei. (All names have been changed.) For many years he collected antiquities. From the U.S., or auction sites in Europe, or dealers from Russia, he would buy medals, gold coins, honorary weaponry, protective armor of medieval knights. Now this whole collection has turned into a burden for him: What Russians call a suitcase without a handle (**чемодан без ручки**): Too difficult to lug around, but one regrets throwing it away.



“I’m worried the Russian troops will come, and take this away from me,” the antiquarian confides in the reporter. “You know that in Russia you have to have a license to keep museum weapons in your collection. And who is going to provide me with

such a permit? Due to this, I have been forced to slowly sell off my collection, and just for kopecks. Whatever I can't sell, I will bury somewhere, and then I will leave the country."

But what about selling his entire collection within Ukraine? It's complicated. People are very reluctant to spend their foreign currency, which constantly rises in value. People are only buying small things that they can hide in their pockets: coins, jewelry. These things are worth more than gold now, and people can easily sneak them past the border guards when they leave the country. But larger items, especially antiquities, require the assistance of professional smugglers. And they don't come cheap. And even then, one must worry that Ukrainian or Polish bandits might get tipped off and seize the loot. Romanians as well: Both Poles and Romanians are known for their thieving ways.

yalensis: I can't help but think about that final scene in Ilf/Petrov's famous novel "The Little Golden Calf". In which the hero Ostop Bender is fleeced by Romanian border guards, relieved of all his ikons and jewelry, when he attempts to flee from the Soviet Union.

Boyko asks his acquaintance: What is the state of the Antiquities market in Ukraine nowadays?

"It's a catastrophe. Somebody just recently dumped onto Ukrainian sites several collections of weapons from the Third Reich; French medieval armor and shields from the era of Louis XIII; all kinds of medieval weaponry. These exhibits are worth hundreds of thousands of Euros. But even in Europe, nobody wants to buy these objects any more."

People Are Disappearing From Lvov

Boyko continues his interesting conversation with his antiquarian acquaintance, Sergei. He suggests helpfully: “Why not move your collections into a bank vault?”

“The banks could be nationalized at any moment or looted by Nationalists. Besides, it’s getting harder and harder to secure any property, even in banks. For hours at a time there is no electricity, which means the security cameras don’t work either. The streets are full of armed groupings of low-IQ citizenry, so even a bodyguard is not going to help you. Not to mention that you can be stopped and arrested in the blink of an eye. In which case you’d give them anything to get away. For example, [while driving] I was recently stopped randomly at a checkpoint, so [the soldiers] could examine my phone. On my phone they saw a number from the Russian Federation. I don’t even know whose it was, it could have been junk mail or spam. But they almost killed me on the spot. They only let me go when I pointed out to them that the so-called conversation didn’t even last one second. I was shaking all over, knowing that in my car I had an album full of coins worth tens of thousands of dollars.



The goons at the checkpoint didn’t notice Sergei’s coin collection.

Loss of power has engendered outbreaks of criminal activity, not

only in the capital of Ukraine, but also in cities such as Lvov, Odessa, and Kharkov.

Another one of reporter Boyko's acquaintances is "Andrei", who is a resident of Lvov: "The number of apartment burglaries in Lvov has skyrocketed. It's gotten to the point where elderly residents are afraid to leave their flat. People are being murdered even for small sums of money, armed drug addicts are extorting pensions from pensioners. There are even cases of children murdering their parents in order to get their modest pension. Sometimes it happens that well-off people simply disappear, and everybody assumes they left for Europe. Throughout the whole of the Ukraine there is a hunt on for foreigners. Even former [foreign] mercenaries are being kidnapped, for the ransom money from their families. And the kidnappers don't even worry about withdrawing the money [of their victims] from the ATM machines. Sometimes they just walk right up to the ATMs accompanied by an entire, fully-armed Nationalist platoon."

According to Andrei, the Territorial Defense Units of the Ukrainian army have become criminalized to such a degree that they have begun to divide up Lvov into different criminal regions, after meeting with other organized crime leaders. And these mobsters are not just locals, but also involve the international criminal community. Already back in the 1990's, all the smuggling routes between Lvov and Poland were set up, and these same routes still function reliably at 100% capacity.

Diplomats' Cars Carrying Hand Grenades

Andrei: "Back in those days [the 90's], people trafficked in counterfeit electronics and sneakers, later it was stolen automobiles, and nowadays it's mostly narcotics and weapons.

Weapons especially change hands without any kind of controls. There was this old barn near a neighboring house, where some military guys had built a cache of weapons. Every night cars bearing Polish diplomatic plates would approach the windows leading to the basement, and people would emerge carrying boxes and crates. People say that Ukrainians arms caches are being sold to criminal gangs in Europe for a quarter of their actual value. After passing through the Polish border guards, these weapons make their way to the end-customers in Czechia and Germany.”

All that remains is to hope that the local criminal class, armed to the teeth with grenades and machine guns, has not decided to attack a NATO nuclear base; but will just stick to robbing banks and museums. After all, millions of Ukrainians received the possibility of settling down in Europe, according to their own standards of what constitutes a dignified life. And now it is the turn of Europe and the U.S. to endure these newcomers.



Graeme Biggar

The Ukrainian criminal class (and by the way, it is precisely the

Ukrainian criminal class which people in the U.S. and Europe used to call “Russian”) has started to express an interest in heavy weapons; a fact which arouses the unease of an Englishman named [Graeme Biggar](#), who holds the title of Director General of the National Crime Agency. Although he probably gets a lot of jokes about his name, Biggar is serious about combatting organized crime and narco-trafficking. And, according to reporter Boyko, Biggar has expressed his apprehensions that at least some of the grenades and machine guns and so on, provided to the Ukrainian army by Western countries, may wind up in Great Britain, in the hands of criminal gangs and terrorist cells.

The Ukrainian underworld, meanwhile, has bigger fish to fry: They are already busy driving out other criminals throughout Europe, taking over whole swathes of mob-type businesses such as prostitution, narcotics and gun-running. But in this, they are forced to compete with other non-native criminals from Africa and Asia. At stake are huge profits, and it’s only a matter of time before Western “heavy weapons” start falling into the hands of extremists and terrorists. There may come a time when the “civilized” world begins to associate the word de-Ukrainization with the word de-criminalization.