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Society Russian invasion in Ukraine

Ukrainians have always felt themselves to be free Europeans

On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. Every day we hear news reports about the consequences for Ukrainian citizens. As a mathematical journal we are very curious to know how our colleagues at mathematical departments are dealing with the current situation. Dr. Alexander Kuchansky, Head of Department of Information Systems and Technology at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv shares his experiences.

Until recently I believed that the most formative memories I had was the birth of my daughter, four years ago. Unforgettable feelings: light, full of happiness to hold your continuation in your hands. But at 5 am on 24 February 2022, with the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and the

first explosions, an opposite episode was added to these memories — full of hopelessness and uncertainty for the future of children, relatives and all Ukrainians. The following days cannot be summarized in these text lines. I would rather forget them: explosions, the roar of bombers, gunfights on the streets, the acrid smell of mold in a damp bomb shelter.

My daughter quickly learned that you need to fall on the ground and hide your head in the case of any whistling or loud noise. This is something that will always be with us now, even though such episodes are unthinkable for Europe in the 21st century. My family and I were lucky to be able to evacuate to the western part of Ukraine. But not everyone had such a possibility. Mass terror, murders of civilians in Irpin, Bucha, Mariupol and throughout the occupied part of Ukraine, filtration camps and rocket attacks took lives, and are still taking them. Mass war crimes by the Russian troops in Ukraine, reminiscent of episodes of the Second World War and the peculiarities of the political ideology of current Russia gave birth to a new term that is already familiar to everyone — Rushism or Russian fascism [1].

Since the education in February 2022 was remote (due to the back then ongoing Covid-19 restrictions), many students were at home in different regions of Ukraine. By this unfortunate coincidence some of them could not leave due to the occupation of these territories. The contact with them was also missing. The situation improved with the de-occupation of areas around Kyiv, Sumy and Chernihiv. However, the psychological condition of our students was terrible. Since the beginning of the war a psychological service has been actively



Alexander Kuchansky main scientific interests are scientometrics, scholarly communication, gender differences in scientific collaboration, time-series data mining, et cetera.

The Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, founded in 1853, was named after writer and political activist Taras Shevchenko, who is considered the founder of modern Ukrainian literature. The university has produced many famous alumni, including:

Mykhailo Hrushevsky was a Ukrainian academician, politician, historian, and President of the Central Council of Ukraine (1917–1918).

Volodymyr Klychko is a former Ukrainian professional boxer. He held the world heavyweight championship twice, including the unified WBA (Super), IBF, WBO, and IBO. In February 2022, Klychko joined the Kyiv Territorial Defense Forces in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He holds a PhD in sports science.

Maryna Viazovska is a Ukrainian mathematician who solved the sphere-packing problem in dimension 8. She also solved a conjecture by Jaap Korevaar and John-Jules Meyer. She was awarded the Fields Medal in July 2022, making her the second woman (after Maryam Mirzakhani) and the first Ukrainian to receive it.



The main building of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

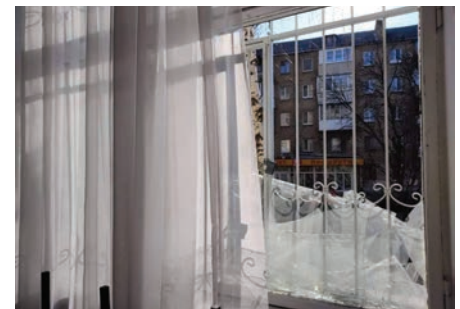
working at our university, trying to help everyone in need. Currently the education is offered remotely, because many students are internally displaced persons or left to other countries due to war.

At the beginning of the war also the Faculty of Information Technology building was damaged as a result of shelling by Russian troops, but currently the reconstruction work is underway and the faculty staff members could continue their work.

Even under these circumstances our students actively use the academic mobility programs, in particular Erasmus+. Some of them have even completed their studies while staying in the EU countries. At the same time from the first days of the war some of our staff members and gradu-

ate students joined the Territorial Defense Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Thanks to the situational study process, introduced at the university, they successfully teach and improve their qualification even in such extreme conditions.

Unfortunately, all foreign post-graduate and some Ukrainian students had to take an academic leave because they could not continue their studies. One of the reasons was a difficult psychological tension that prevented them from studying. Students who until recently were or just left the occupation, or have relatives on the territory occupied by Russia, with whom the relationship is complicated, experience difficulties with the lack of motivation, panicky moods and the inability to gain new



The building of the Faculty of Information Technology of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv was damaged as a result of shelling by Russian troops (March 2022)

knowledge. Scientists of the faculty who are involved in the international projects convince their colleagues not to cooperate with scientists affiliated in Russia. This country currently has nothing to do with the civilized world.

At the moment, more than 20% of the territory of Ukraine remains occupied by Russia, which is larger in area than Switzerland and Austria combined. But Ukrainians can defend their land from invaders and are doing everything possible, thanks to the help of the Netherlands and the entire EU, Great Britain, the USA, et cetera. Ukrainians have always felt themselves to be free Europeans. No imperial discourse can be imposed on our new generation. During twenty years of transformation our society went through two revolutions, the main idea of which was freedom and democracy, and the ongoing war with Russia — the country whose leadership considers democracy the main threat to its existence. Drawing attention of the world community to the Russian invasion of Ukraine is something that everyone can do, and it does help all Ukrainians in their struggle. ☘



Photo: Facebook

Mykyta Perebyinis was a student of the Faculty of Information Technology at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. He, his mother and sister were killed near Irpin [2].



Photo: Teach for Ukraine

Yulia Zdanovska was a student of the Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. She was killed by the Russian shelling of Kharkiv on 3 March 2022. She was 21 [3].

References

- 1 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/magazine/ruscism-ukraine-russia-war.html>.
- 2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/world/europe/ukraine-family-perebyinis-kyiv.html>.
- 3 <https://cacm.acm.org/news/259846-in-memoriam-yulia-zdanovska-2000-2022/fulltext>.