

Wednesday offered only a few hours of electricity, the new normal in Ukraine as Russian missiles strikes have now knocked out half of the country's power generation capacity. It doesn't take much to grasp what effect this has on an economy that's already battered, not to mention to the morale of its citizens. [A direct result, by the way, of the inability or unwillingness of the U.S. and Europe to provide Kyiv with sufficient anti-missile systems.]

Since the current age runs on the fuel of electrons, by the end of the day I was feeling under-productive and so was pleased when a message rolled in from a friend



here in Odesa wondering if I could buy a helmet for a drone pilot she knows. As it turned out, I could do better than that, because my personal helmet was sitting around, rarely used. Texting the pilot a few pictures of the gear, he immediately replied that it was exactly what he needed and thanked me "for literally saving my life". Hyperbole or not, it was a good thing to hear, so ignoring the umpteenth air raid alarm, I rushed down to the street, past the cacophony of portable generators, to

the local Nova Poshta office (you've read my glowing references to Ukraine's super efficient version of Fedex before). Twelve dollars later, the counter clerk informed me that the pilot would have his helmet in Donetsk the next day by 6:00 p.m.

Walking back to my apartment, I came upon a rickety wooden table on the sidewalk piled high with fat, blood-red cherries and stopped to examine them. The vendor, a portly woman in her 50s, explained cheerfully, as she took my money, that she hated "crazy Joe Biden" but loved Putin. She also mentioned that her "hobby" was smoking and drinking, but that she'd had to give up the latter due to a heart condition. Nonetheless she was optimistic that her cardiologist would soon give her clearance to recommence consuming her beloved moonshine.





With that to ponder, I returned home and, while sampling the cherries by candlelight, received a text message from my pal Lena with news that Nikolai, one of the drone pilots I visited last week, had been wounded in combat. Nevertheless, he and I were in touch later that evening discussing other equipment needs for his unit.

Not exactly an ordinary afternoon, but then few of them are. Thank god.

www.inthetrenchesukraine.org