

Considering recent military gains by Russian forces in northeastern Ukraine, and the unreliable support of much of the West, I've begun to ponder what might happen if the Ukrainian people were left to their own devices by their so-called allies. [Let me quickly say that I don't expect this to happen, but then again I didn't expect the Russian invasions of 2014 and 2022, so my prognostication skills aren't exactly infallible.] Nonetheless, I'm quite sure that Ukraine's armed forces are planning and preparing for worst-case scenarios, including the possibility of a long-term guerrilla war. So, let me take a very quick stab at explaining what might that look like.

First, it's important to understand that this country has a fairly recent and very bloody history of underground resistance to Moscow. When three Ukrainian partisans were hunted down and killed by the KGB in 1960, it marked the end of nearly two decades of armed resistance, against German Nazi forces but most significantly against the USSR. There are very dark chapters in the history of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, but it was, without a doubt, a militantly nationalist organization that took on the vastly larger Soviet state and inflicted terrible losses. In 1951, the CIA's covert operations chief estimated that some 35,000 Soviet police troops and Communist party cadres had been eliminated by guerrillas affiliated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the period after the end of World War II. Modern Ukrainians, even young ones, know about this period and take a great deal of inspiration from the dogged effectiveness of their combative ancestors.

Moving on to the current era, since the initial Russian takeover of Crimea and large parts of northeastern and southeastern Ukraine, there has been regular covert resistance to occupation. Numerous Russian and Ukrainian puppet administrators and soldiers have been assassinated, often with car bombs. These attacks have sometimes been carried out with the support of Ukraine's intelligence services, and sometimes



autonomously by locals. Railway tracks, bridges, and switching stations have been blown up and trains have been derailed. Fuel depots have been set ablaze. Ukrainian civilians, at huge risk to themselves, often pass on to their authorities information about Russian troop movements and arms deliveries. And there have been reliable reports of Ukrainian women delivering poisoned food and vodka to Russian soldiers.

Not all resistance is so gruesome. Ukrainian flags have been hoisted from viewpoints in the occupied territories, and Russian-supported TV stations have been hacked and pirated.



Bottom line: regardless of what the wavering West does or doesn't do, I see no possibility of most Ukrainians resigning themselves to the Russian occupation of 20% of their land. They know their cause is just and will resist, often violently, even if it takes decades. Policy makers in Washington and Berlin should bear this inconvenient reality in mind as they desperately seek ways of foisting an unjust peace upon this country.