

There's been a lot written about Ukrainian fortitude and resilience. After a while it begins to smell like propaganda, and indeed some of it is. But it's also true.

Here's a little story from my morning.

This week the Russians have been hitting Ukrainian cities with ballistic missiles on a regular basis. Odesa, where I'm living, has been struck for the past three nights. People have been killed and wounded while strolling in the park, sitting in their homes, or simply being at work. Add these attacks to the depressingly long list of Russian war crimes visited upon Ukrainians over the past twenty-six months: torture, rape, kidnapping, looting, summary execution and so on. Yesterday, the US Department of State announced that "Russia has used the chemical weapon chloropicrin against Ukrainian forces in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)."

But I'm digressing. Last night's missile attack on Odesa set ablaze a big warehouse run by Nova Poshta, Ukraine's equivalent of Fedex, injuring thirteen people. To the bitter amusement of Ukrainians, Russia claimed that the facility was being used to store US munitions. That accusation is probably nonsense, but it's true that Nova Poshta has provided tremendous moral and material support to Ukraine's efforts to defend itself, something that was brought home to me when I visited one of its more than 11,000 branches.

Like a set of the dystopian TV show "The Walking Dead", scruffy stray dogs patrolled a grimy rundown courtyard that seemingly last received a coat of paint during the Brezhnev era. But walking through a door, a shiny, ultra-modern shipping operation revealed itself. There people lined up to ship and collect parcels from around Ukraine or abroad. Some, like my friend Lena and I, had come to send care packages to relatives and friends serving in the Ukrainian forces. Clothing, body armor, books and boots were all being rung up and dispatched with friendly efficiency.

Today, Lena's boxes contained Easter pastries baked by a cohort of patriotic women. As Lena put it, "the war brought us together". Ukrainians are used to Nova Poshta's prodigious reach, but to me it was tremendously impressive that these delicate treats would soon arrive in the eastern town of Kostyantynivka, a so-called "fortress city" located a mere half hour drive from the Russians. Maybe even tomorrow some grizzled soldiers who have been fighting, in many cases since the beginning, will bite

into a taste of home. And they will grin like children, thanks to Lena and people like her.

Ukraine is many things. It can be chaotic and corrupt at times. Bureaucratic and hidebound. But it can also be incredibly adaptive and creative. Resilience.

