

March 7th, 2022

A brief overview of the situation in Ukraine

- 1. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONFLICT.** Fighting is going in the west of Kyiv – in Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, Vasylykiv, Vyshhorod. The targeted bombing of civilian buildings sheltering people continues. This represents a **shift from creating a humanitarian crisis to open terror**, with reports of hostage situations, executions of displaced people (Irpin, Mariupol) and indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets. More than 200 schools, kindergartens and several Orthodox churches have already been destroyed or severely damaged – most of them serving as shelters for civilians. Russian troops fired on a bakery in Makariv (Kyiv region), killing 13 employees. The death of the mayor of Hostomel, Yu. Pylypko, shot by Russians was confirmed. Shops in the occupied cities (Trostanets, Melitopol and other cities) were looted by Russian soldiers according to locals. According to intelligence estimates, Russian forces have already fired 625 missiles at Ukraine. At night, Russian troops entered the airport territory in Mykolayiv, and later repelled on the same day. The Ukrainian armed forces have sunk a ship of the Russian fleet and continue to counterattack in the Kharkiv region. At night, a powerful explosion was heard coming from the Luhansk oil depot, provoking a fire. The Russian side stated it was caused by a Ukrainian missile strike. In the evening of March 7th, a fire broke out at an oil depot in the Zhytomyr region as a result of shelling. **Overall, a relative lull in some parts of the front line seems to be observed. It is likely that it pre-empts a new round of confrontation.** It is assumed that the Russian troops are trying to hit infrastructures aiming at paralysing the Ukrainian systems in order to gain leverage ahead of the negotiations due to take place on March 10th, in a similar fashion to the Russian strategy ahead of the Minsk negotiations. Since March 9th is a symbolic day for Ukraine (the birthday of the national poet Taras Shevchenko), an aggravation is to be expected on behalf of Russia, with an expansion of the range of weapons used.
- 2. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION. The international staff of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) has left Ukraine.** At the moment, the organization is talking about a temporary evacuation. The first session of the **International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague in the case of Russia's war crimes** took place. Actions in support of Ukraine in various countries of the world are still underway. Numerous videos showed international volunteers joining the Ukrainian armed forces and resisting Russian aggression. There were also reports that Russia is recruiting fighters in third countries, in particular Syria, to fight on the RF's side in Ukraine.
- 3. NEGOTIATIONS. The third round of negotiations took place in Belarus**, without bringing tangible results as the Russian side continues to insist on conditions that the Ukrainian side cannot accept without causing significant civil outrage. *According to insider sources, Russia came up with a new condition – the appointment of pro-Russian politician Yuriy Boyko to the position of Prime Minister of Ukraine. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Russia agreed to meet in Antalya (Turkey) on March 10th.* Both Ministers are planning to attend the Antalya Diplomatic Forum to be held on March 11th.
- 4. HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION.** The Russian side changed its negotiation strategy on humanitarian “green corridors” for civilians, according to the representative of the Ukrainian delegation, M. Podoliak. For example, in the cities of the Kyiv and Sumy regions, which are under Russian control or surrounded by Russian troops, the Russian delegation proposed to organise a **“green corridor” to Russia or Belarus** for the civilian population. This is seen in Ukraine as an attempt to hold civilian hostages. The **shelling of routes previously agreed for the evacuation of civilians** continues, and many people were killed trying to evacuate. Ukrainian mobile operators have been able to **restore communications in Kramatorsk** (Donetsk region) and announced the introduction of domestic roaming services. i.e., if there is no connection with one operator in a certain location, the phone can connect to the network of another operator.
- 5. INFORMATION DIMENSION.** The official narrative currently spread in the **Russian information space** is that Russia has launched a “special operation” in order to save more Ukrainian and Russian lives in

the future. **New narratives** are being introduced according to which V. Zelenskyy lost control over the Ukrainian army, in particular outside of Kyiv. Additionally, those narratives allege that Ukrainian forces face logistical issues, and the Russian army is not storming Ukrainian cities to avoid casualties. Russian media also portrays V. Zelenskyy as sitting in a bunker, not understanding the real state of affairs and unable to influence the course of combat operations. The spreading of such narratives just **ahead of the expected Antalya negotiations** serves to ***a priori* discredit the role and importance of the Ukrainian side**. For the TOT CADLR, information is circulated according to which the “DNR military” saved the local population from threats from the Azov Battalion by creating humanitarian corridors in Volnovakha and Mariupol. Russian media also disseminate information about “mercenaries” from Western countries fighting for Ukraine and Kyiv. Such reports stress that international law will not apply to them – for example, they will not be considered as prisoners of war by the RF. **Trials of participants to anti-war protests begun in the RF**. For now, only the administrative responsibility of protesters is being considered. According to the official Russian narrative, those who held signs “no to war” discredit international security because this is not a war but a “special operation” taking place in Ukraine. According to official information from the Russian authorities, 5,000 people have been detained during the anti-war protests. However, those numbers do not match with reports issued the day prior to trials, indicating that only 5,000 people took part in such actions across Russia.