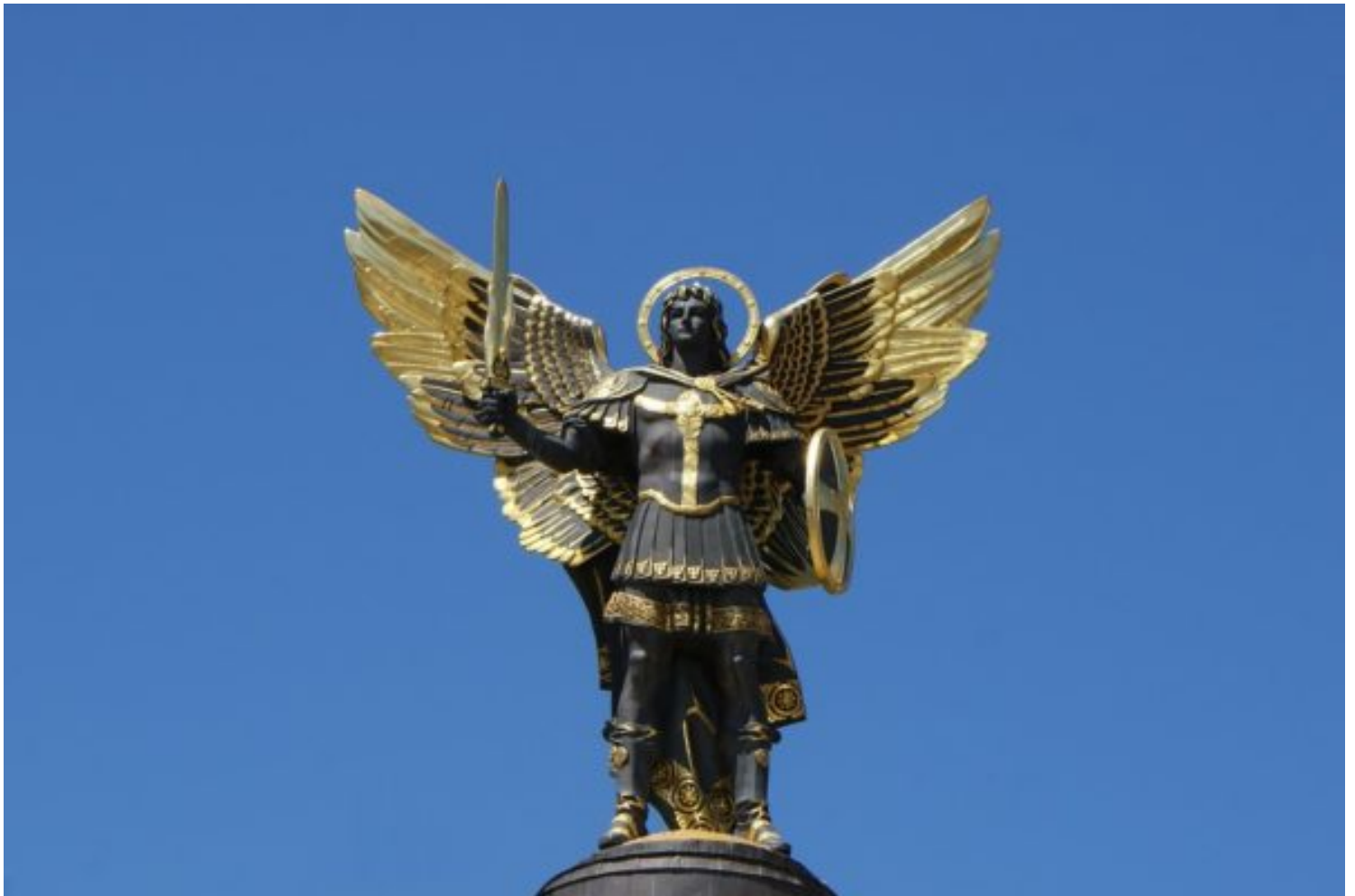


RUSSIAN ATTACK ON UKRAINE INTENSIFIES: VOICES FROM KYIV

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Kyiv is under constant air attacks. The sirens can go

off at any minute, sending the capital's residents into basements or the subway, and the warning usually sounds at least a couple of times throughout the day and night.

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Only the laptop's electronic screen lit up Darina Rebro's face during an interview by video call with the *European Conservative*.

Rebro, a journalist and contributor for this publication, was in her family's flat in Kyiv with her mother and elderly grandparents. Except for the glow from the computer, the house was dark. Russian artillery uses the light in the windows to determine their targets during air strikes, she explained. The more light, the more citizens in the building. And they aim for the light.

"They are like the orcs from *Lord of the Rings*," Rebro said.

As Russia's attack on Ukraine continues into its second week and the invading force doubles down on its assault, daily life is in disarray, but Ukrainians still maintain high spirits.

"The situation at this point is unpredictable. I find it hard to plan the next day. It's hard to plan not only the next day but the next five minutes," Rebro said.

Kyiv is under constant air attacks. The sirens can go off at any minute, sending the capital's residents into basements or the subway, and the warning usually sounds at least

a couple of times during the day and a couple of times at night. Some, including Rebro and her family, have decided to hunker down right in their flats, moving to the interior where at least two walls stand between them and any Russian projectiles.

They had spent the first nights of the air assault on Kyiv in the basement of the library across the street as a makeshift bomb shelter, but such buildings have also proven to be potential death traps as they are not built to withstand the force of a missile hit and perhaps, like the library, also show signs of existing weakness. In some cases, people had become trapped in the basements where they sought shelter when the building sustained a hit from Russian artillery.

There is a strict curfew in effect. According to Rebro, though the Russian ground troops have not entered Kyiv, one of the principal concerns in the capital, apart from the air strikes, is the possible presence of saboteurs or Russian infiltrators. Anyone in the streets after curfew is considered a suspected enemy, and civilians who have ventured out for innocent purposes or refused to cooperate with soldiers who stopped them have been shot. Rebro has been obeying the imposition scrupulously as a part of her war effort.

“It really does help,” she said, of keeping the streets clear to be able to easily identify mischief.

Despite the violence, Ukrainians have not panicked, according to both Rebro and Daria Fedotova, also a contributor to the *European Conservative*. As the fighting has intensified, some million Ukrainians have fled the country in the last week, according to the United Nations, but there is no recrimination among Ukrainians.

“There is an understanding that those whose nervous systems can’t manage, it is better for them to go,” Rebro said.

Those who have elected to stay, she explained, are simply repressing their fear to process it once peace comes. For Rebro, her faith in God also helps her cope.

“It’s been a lot of chutzpah and God’s grace,” she said of the amazing resistance of Ukraine.

The reports of such chutzpah circulate and keep Ukrainian morale high. Videos of a group of Roma people stealing a Russian tank and a farmer hauling off an enemy armoured vehicle with his tractor have gone viral. The government, too, makes cracks. Fedotova said that the tax administration announced that captured Russian war vehicles didn’t need to be declared on taxes, first, because they are considered war trophies and second because their monetary value doesn’t reach the legal value threshold required to be taxed—a dig at the quality of Russian military equipment.

Fedotova, who lives 20 kilometres north of Kyiv, believes her home will be spared a direct attack, but aircraft are constantly flying overhead, and the sound Ukrainian anti-aircraft artillery is now like background noise. The main danger they face at this point is from a downed aircraft, which could fall on their home. One home nearby had already suffered such a fate.

But even Fedotova has been a bit surprised at the resistance of Ukrainians. The city of Kharkiv, closer to the Russian border, is currently under severe assault from the Russians.

“I think the Russians thought they would welcome them as the area has been quite pro-Russian,” she said, “but no, they are staying steady.”

This is the spirit of Ukraine overall, with or without direct military assistance from Europe or NATO.

“We are still quite ready to defend,” Fedotova said. “I’m not sure that the Russians quite knew what they were getting into.”

Nevertheless, any western intervention on behalf of Ukraine is appreciated. She said that sending weapons to the country is truly helpful, and that the international economic

sanctions recently put in place are capable of breaking down the Russian economy, which could inhibit Russia's war effort.

"We can handle Russia," Fedotova asserted of her fellow Ukrainians, but she continues to think NATO should engage in direct military action for its own sake.

"If countries want to stay relevant and powerful, they need to step up," she said.