

March 17, 2023

The Lost Daughters of Ukraine

Reader Letter

It's been over one year since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In that time, countless war crimes have been committed. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been kidnapped. Tens of thousands of soldiers and innocent civilians have died. Millions of families have been displaced.

Throughout it all, the world has witnessed the strength and tenacity of Ukrainians battling for their right to exist, but Ukraine's black earth is soaked in the blood of generations of its brave defenders. How many people realize that this war actually started nine years ago, in 2014, when Russia invaded and illegally annexed parts of Ukraine? How many know about the millions killed in the Holodomor, Stalin's terror famine? How many remember that the Soviet Union was allied with Nazi Germany and collectively started World War II by invading and occupying Poland (and what is now western Ukraine) in 1939? How many realize that one of Hitler's main goals was to eradicate Ukrainians and colonize their land with Germans?

For many people, the past feels far away. Historic events are brought to life on TV or in novels. They aren't a part of our everyday lives. But in Ukraine, the death and destruction of Russia's invasion eerily echoes the tragedies their ancestors endured—trench warfare, attacks on civilians, genocide, and Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.

I explore many of these themes in my book, *THE LOST DAUGHTERS OF UKRAINE*—combining history, fiction, and my own family's experiences in Ukraine and as refugees to create the story of a family ripped apart by World War II. I'm honored to share this deeply personal



novel with you, but just as when *THE MEMORY KEEPER OF KYIV* published last year, I am, sadly, once again releasing a book about a past assault on Ukraine during the current invasion.

Keep Ukraine in your hearts. Listen to and elevate the voices of people living through this horror. Learn about their vibrant culture and both the tragic and beautiful parts of their history to understand why they fight so valiantly for their country. And, most importantly, please continue to support Ukraine in every way you can.

Slava Ukrayini!

Erin Littenken