

## Unbreakable Dinner Speech from Natalia Sushko

24 February 2023

We lived a normal life. We had jobs, our children went to school. We were building our homes. Sometimes we were happy, sometimes sad, we loved and hoped - we lived our lives. We lived the life we chose until the Russian onslaught came.

At around four o'clock Kyiv time on February 24, Putin, announced a "special military operation" with the purported purpose of "demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine." In just a few minutes, missile strikes began all over the territory of Ukraine, including not far from Kyiv. Russian troops invaded Ukraine near Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernihiv, and Sumy, entering from Russia, Belarus, and Crimea, which is temporarily occupied by Russia.

The Russian army carried out insidious attacks on civilians, medical facilities and schools, destroying Ukrainian cities, firing at "green" evacuation corridors, regularly disregarding the norms of the Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of the civilian population in time of war, and they committed war crimes, cynically killing Ukrainians.

Counting on a quick victory, the invading troops ran into strong resistance from Ukrainians, who fiercely defend their land, will and independence, despite the fact that ordinary life was crumbling before their eyes.

February 24, 2022 forever divided the lives of Ukrainians into before and after. All the mothers present here woke up their children with the words: "Wake up, the war started." According to the UN, at the end of March, 60% of Ukrainian children were forced to leave their native homes due to the military actions of the Russian side.

"Slaves are not allowed into heaven. This is the meaning of the Ukrainian interpretation of the will. This is the reason why there will be no enemy left on our land," said our president.

Today, Ukrainians are more united than ever - they stop tanks and armoured personnel carriers with their bare hands, go to rallies in Russian occupied cities, because they don't know how to keep quiet. Every Ukrainian selflessly fights for his country on his front as a volunteer, journalist, cook, driver, artist, etc. The war has erased all shaky planted structures that brought disunity, the awareness of Ukrainian identity inevitably crystallizes in every citizen of Ukraine.

The war affected every Ukrainian. Everyone present here ended up in England by the will of fate. Many of us have gone through months of wandering, disorientation, lack of support, confusion, which led to various problems amid constant stress and uncertainty.

Once in Buckinghamshire, we received such care and support that we could not have hoped for. We have already thanked our hosts, and this evening we would like to give our thanks to some other key people.

We'd like to thank Sarah Green MP for assisting many of us and our hosts with challenges such as getting numerous updates on our visa applications. We also thank you for raising our concerns with central government, on matters such as vehicle registration and driving licenses. We feel your involvement and your concern for us. You have supported us and taken an interest in our well-being and we are grateful to you.

We would also like to thank Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Gareth Williams, Deputy, leader of Buckinghamshire Council and Deborah Stevens, Head of the Homes for Ukraine Team for the tremendous support you have and are continuing to give us. You were well organised for our arrival and you have supported us in so many different ways. All possible information is available through the council's website, but information is also provided by representatives of the council, our Sponsor Liaison Officers, who support Ukrainians and sponsors.

Why are we here? Because we are unbreakable!

The struggle of Ukrainians changes the world and unites all reasonable people in the fight for the important values of independence, democracy, and freedom!

"This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy." – Winston Churchill  
In perhaps Churchill's most powerful speech he did not hide from the British public that in the pursuit of the common goal for England's peace, security and survival he was offering his people "blood, sweat and tears." And indeed - our ideals come with a price, our values at a cost. There will always be threats which seem insurmountable. They need to be countered with convictions of honour and good sense.

"I think that this year is the most difficult year in the history of independent Ukraine. Yes, there will still be tests of the strength of our state ahead. Therefore, at this moment and on this day, it is important not to forget all those who today stand and defend our borders, people and homes, and those who are our friends who have been with us all this time. There is a feeling that February 24 will be the start of a new year for Ukraine."- as President Mr. Zelensky has just recently said.

And now let's honour with a moment of silence the heroic feat of the soldiers who fell while performing combat missions to protect our state and civilians who died as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We remember.

We want this year to be victorious. We believe in it and do everything for it".

We ARE unbreakable!  
Slava Ukraini