Ukraine, between mud, blood, and fatigue: the respect we owe to those who defend the Nation

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War, when viewed up close, **has nothing epic about it**. It lacks the composure of ceremonies and the cleanliness of words spoken from afar. It has the color of mud, the smell of iron, the weight of fatigue. It has a nightstand where supplements coexist with a hand grenade. It has young men barely in their twenties who sleep dressed, men who haven't known a real leave for over a year, soldiers who have stopped distinguishing days because each day resembles the previous one.

This is where we must start. **Not from rhetoric, but from reality**. Defending one's land means inhabiting an extreme dimension, where fear is not an exception but a constant presence. On the Zaporizhzhia front, Ukrainian assaulters describe a war made of repelled offensives, continuous infiltrations, drones, mines, trenches, and bodies left on the ground. They recount the fatigue of those who continue to fight not for glory, but out of necessity.

The harshest phrase is also the most revealing: **“The Russians are like zombies, and we are tired of killing them”**. It is a phrase that wounds, but precisely for this reason, it returns the truth of the conflict. In war, there is nothing romantic. **There is only the human cost of survival**.

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Behind the uniform is a person who has left everything

Behind every uniform, there is not an abstract symbol, but a concrete life. There is a twenty-two-year-old who until recently could think of the future as a promise. There is a man who used to be a bricklayer, another who built furniture, yet another who had a home, a partner, normal habits. Then came the war, and with it the need to leave everything behind.

Respect for the military is born exactly here: in recognizing that they are not distant figures, but men and women called to undertake the heaviest task a State can assign to its citizens. Defending borders, protecting civilians, resisting while everything around collapses. It is not an automatic gesture, it is not an impersonal obligation: **it is a choice of extreme responsibility**.

Too often, in societies accustomed to peace, the soldier is reduced to an image, a slogan, a presence to be celebrated only on formal occasions. But reality is harsher. **The soldier is the one who remains when others must be saved**. Remains under fire, remains in fatigue, remains in fear. And in that remaining, they defend not only a line on the ground but the very possibility of a free life for others.

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Respect is not rhetoric: it is a national duty

For this reason, respect for the military **cannot be an empty formula**. It is not enough to remember them in ceremonies, it is not enough to applaud them on anniversaries. We must understand that behind every post, every patrol, every trench, there is a concrete suffering that protects everyone's security. **The peace of civilians, when it exists, is never free**: someone guards it, someone defends it, someone pays for it personally.

The harshness of war teaches us precisely this. Not to love war, but to honor those who face it so that the Nation can continue to live, work, and hope. Not to exalt violence, but to recognize the courage, discipline, and moral strength of those who stand between the community and the threat.

When the world gets distracted, when politics slows down, when public opinion becomes accustomed to horror, **they remain**. Tired, marked, sometimes drained, but still there. And it is in this image that the truest respect is born: **not the shouted one, but the conscious one**. Because in the mud of the trenches and the solitude of the front, the military do not defend just a territory. **They defend the Nation, its continuity, its freedom, its common home**.

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