

# Episode 7 Interview Sam & Ievgen Malik 11

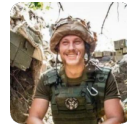
July 9, 2026 • Duration: 2:03:25

## Speakers on this Episode:



**Samuel P.N. Cook**

Founder



**Ievgen Malik**

Senior Sergeant of the Marine Corps

## Episode Summary

In this episode of the Ukraine Military History Podcast, host Sam Cook shifts the spotlight away from politicians and generals to honor the individuals who bear the heaviest burden of war: the common soldiers on the ground. Drawing on his own experiences as a U.S. Army troop commander, Cook introduces Marine Sergeant Yevgeny Malik—a close friend of the military history center who embodies the courage of those who run toward the sound of gunfire. Malik's story is a powerful testament to the ordinary citizens who stepped up to defend their homeland when the ultimate test arrived.

Yevgeny's journey begins in Poltava, where his passion for studying history and watching his nation evolve led him to predict the looming Russian invasion. Spurred by a sense of duty, he enlisted in the Marines, endured grueling training, and prepared for the worst. When the full-scale invasion finally struck, Yevgeny was actually on his way to a planned vacation. Instead of seeking safety, he immediately reversed course, heading straight to the front lines to translate for foreign volunteers and map out active danger zones.

Listeners will be gripped by Yevgeny's firsthand account of the early days of the war, where he survived intense artillery shelling, spotted oncoming enemy tanks, and executed high-stakes tactical retreats. As the conflict intensified, he and his fellow soldiers found themselves entering a besieged city, shedding heavy gear to evade flanking threats, and holding a critical strategic line against overwhelming odds.

The episode culminates in the desperate defense of the factory gates, where a diverse group of defenders united under constant bombardment to save their country. This raw and deeply personal conversation offers an unfiltered look at the reality of modern combat and the immense sacrifices made by the everyday heroes fighting for Ukraine's survival. Tune in to experience a profound story of resilience, brotherhood, and unwavering duty.

## Show Notes

- 0:00 – Honoring the Common Soldier
- 9:40 – Growing Up in Poltava
- 9:57 – Studying a Rich History
- 14:54 – Watching the Nation Change
- 20:09 – Predicting the Coming Invasion
- 25:07 – Enlisting in the Marines
- 29:50 – Enduring the Harsh Training
- 34:51 – Canceling a Planned Vacation

|         |   |                                    |
|---------|---|------------------------------------|
| 39:52   | – | Translating for Foreign Volunteers |
| 44:52   | – | Mapping the Danger Zone            |
| 49:49   | – | Surviving the Early Shelling       |
| 54:50   | – | Awaiting the Armored Advance       |
| 59:49   | – | Spotting the Enemy Tanks           |
| 1:04:49 | – | Retreating to Better Positions     |
| 1:09:20 | – | Shedding the Heavy Gear            |
| 1:14:23 | – | Facing the Flanking Threat         |
| 1:20:04 | – | Entering the Besieged City         |
| 1:24:43 | – | Holding the Strategic Line         |
| 1:29:46 | – | Uniting the Diverse Forces         |
| 1:34:40 | – | Defending the Factory Gates        |
| 1:39:41 | – | Enduring the Constant Bombardment  |
| 1:44:24 | – | Saving the Entire Country          |

## ● Chapters (22)

|    |                                    |         |
|----|------------------------------------|---------|
| 1  | Honoring the Common Soldier        | 0:00    |
| 2  | Growing Up in Poltava              | 9:40    |
| 3  | Studying a Rich History            | 9:57    |
| 4  | Watching the Nation Change         | 14:54   |
| 5  | Predicting the Coming Invasion     | 20:09   |
| 6  | Enlisting in the Marines           | 25:07   |
| 7  | Enduring the Harsh Training        | 29:50   |
| 8  | Canceling a Planned Vacation       | 34:51   |
| 9  | Translating for Foreign Volunteers | 39:52   |
| 10 | Mapping the Danger Zone            | 44:52   |
| 11 | Surviving the Early Shelling       | 49:49   |
| 12 | Awaiting the Armored Advance       | 54:50   |
| 13 | Spotting the Enemy Tanks           | 59:49   |
| 14 | Retreating to Better Positions     | 1:04:49 |
| 15 | Shedding the Heavy Gear            | 1:09:20 |
| 16 | Facing the Flanking Threat         | 1:14:23 |
| 17 | Entering the Besieged City         | 1:20:04 |
| 18 | Holding the Strategic Line         | 1:24:43 |
| 19 | Uniting the Diverse Forces         | 1:29:46 |
| 20 | Defending the Factory Gates        | 1:34:40 |
| 21 | Enduring the Constant Bombardment  | 1:39:41 |
| 22 | Saving the Entire Country          | 1:44:24 |

## Full Episode Transcript

### Chapter 1: Honoring the Common Soldier



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [0:00]

Hi, it's Sam Cook, the founder and co-host of the Ukraine Military History Podcast. And I'd like to welcome you to my favorite type of episode, which is the story of regular soldiers that are fighting in this war. Ultimately, military history has a huge amount of stories, typically about politicians and military leaders and generals and commanders, but ultimately, the hardest work is always done by the soldier on the ground. When I was a troop commander serving in the United States Army from 2000 to 2013, I got commissioned as an officer, and I was always amazed and humbled by the soldiers that came into my troop when I was preparing to go back and serve as a troop commander in Iraq from 2006 to '7. I remember I would have this rule where I would meet with every single soldier who came and joined our cavalry troop. I just wanted to have a one-on-one conversation with them, get to know them, understand them personally, because I knew I'd be commanding these soldiers in combat, and if worse came to worst, I'd have to talk to their parents if we ended up losing them in combat. So I took that responsibility very seriously. And what always amazed me when I spoke to these soldiers coming into our office was they had knowingly signed up for being a soldier in the United States Army right after 9/11, after our country had been attacked. I always wondered myself, what would I have done? I joined the Army in 1996. We were at peace. I got commissioned as a United States Army officer, and obviously after the war started, I continued serving. But I always asked myself, what would I have done if our nation had been attacked? Because I just didn't know. I didn't know the answer to that question. And what amazed me was that these soldiers were signing up knowing that things were getting worse in Iraq, that the country was having a really difficult time there, and they were going, running towards the sound of the guns. And that was always humbling to me as a commander to command the best that I think our nation had to offer. Whenever a country is invaded or goes to war or sends its sons and daughters to war, a certain amount of people are not gonna wanna do that, right? And whether or not you sign up or not, you always have to admire and give, I think, the most respect to those who run to the sound of the guns. In this next episode, literally that's the exact story that you're gonna hear. A soldier, a sergeant at the time in the Marines called Yevgeny Malik, who is a good friend of the military history center here, is part of the center, has been instrumental in standing up the center and getting it going. And he really represents to me the soldiers that do the hardest work in any war, which is the enlisted soldiers, the sergeants who lead those soldiers. And his story literally starts with him on a bus coming back from vacation. He was on the way to vacation. The full-scale invasion happened. He could have stayed away. He could have been out of the country, left his unit, and not done that, but that was something that he literally would not even think about doing. He tells this vivid story about getting on a bus, seeing everyone else fleeing the country as he's literally going back on a bus from vacation to rejoin his unit in the city of Mariupol. And we all, if you followed this war, know what happened, the Battle of Mariupol. He fought there. This episode talks about his story all the way from his childhood, going to study abroad at a -speaking university in the Czech Republic. He was born and raised actually in Poltava, which is a very famous town in military history, which we discuss in detail in this episode. But really, this story to me exemplifies the reason why Ukraine is still standing as a country because individual soldiers, sergeants, volunteers at the beginning of the war decided to make a stand and fight for their country. So this really represents that. This is actually the first in a three-part series with Yevgeny sharing his story. Rob Lee, our other co-host, did a two-part interview. It was long enough where we decided to split it into two parts, where Yevgeny talks about his experiences at the Battle of Mariupol, going into captivity, and then he ends up detailing in excruciating and graphic detail what it was

Samuel P.N. Cook (continued)

like to be in captivity for two and a half years. So this is the first in a three-part series that I had the privilege of doing with Yevgeny, talking about his youth, really a microcosm of the history of independent Ukraine, which Yevgeny grew up in, and how he made the decision to decide to join the military. He was actually out of the country when the war started in 2014, decided it was his duty to come back and serve Ukraine, so that was his first commitment to service. And then finally going literally towards certain death and/or captivity in the Battle of Mariupol, knowing that at the beginning of the war, making that decision to go anyway to rejoin his unit and fight alongside them. So I really hope that you are impacted by this episode as much as I was, given the interview and the following episodes with Rob Lee talking about Yevgeny's story through the Battle of Mariupol all the way to his release from and recovery from captivity at the hands of the Russians, where he spent two and a half years. Before we start this episode, I just wanted to make a quick word to mention our sponsors. I'm gonna give you a brief introduction for our sponsors, and then at the end of the show, we'll do a longer discussion about each sponsor and what we're offering so that you can get right into the content. So this podcast is funded by the Borderlands Foundation. The Borderlands Foundation is a foundation that I established to make sure Ukraine's heroes are never forgotten. And we have two main centers that are, in effect, the sponsor of this podcast. The first center is the Ukraine Military History Institute. It's an -speaking and -speaking center, which is... Our mission is to translate Ukraine's history from into for the world to consume and learn from. Ukraine has a lot of allies who've supported it. Almost all of them, the common language of military officers, military historians, and professionals is . So the Ukraine Military History Institute created and sponsors this. And I'll tell you all about our programs and how you can support the institute at the end of the episode. The second sponsor for this podcast is the Ukraine Center for Traumatic Stress. This is also part of the Borderlands Foundation. It's a center dedicated to research and raising awareness, and helping to bring into Ukraine cutting edge therapies, treatments, protocols, and education related to post-traumatic stress disorder. The heroes of Ukraine that are fighting this war, whether they're Ukrainians or foreigners who've come in to fight side by side with Ukrainians, they're writing this history which creates the stories, which creates a strong future country. And those memories have costs, so we're dedicated to helping advance the research, treatment, and breakthrough that all soldiers, veterans can have dealing with and overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health that arises from their service. And then finally, our last sponsor is the Borderlands Group. This is a for-profit company that donates the money to fund the Borderlands Foundation and all of our programs. I'm also the founder and president of that organization, and we do military advisory, advisory for defense companies working inside Ukraine, and consulting and software development and technical work for both governments and military defense companies. So with that, that's our sponsors. At the end of the podcast, I'm gonna tell you a lot more about each sponsor if you're looking for ways that you can contribute to the Borderlands Foundation, our two centers, or if you'd like to work with myself, Rob, and other contributors for this podcast. I'll talk to you about how you can get in touch with us through the Borderlands Group for that. So welcome to another episode of the Ukraine Military History Podcast. I'm here with our co-host, Evgeny Malik, who's a former senior sergeant of the Marine Corps. And I wanna spend this episode, Evgeny, talking about your personal story up until captivity. We have a couple more episodes right after this about your time in captivity, filmed with our senior researcher with the Borderlands Foundation, Rob Lee, a top war military analyst. But I wanted to fill in the gaps for people who probably are gonna watch that. I think those are gonna be very interesting for a lot of people to watch, but this is a bit of the backstory. It's like different seasons of Star Wars, I guess. Your story is so long and like you said, we could probably talk several hours just about this one topic. But tell us a little bit about where you grew up in Ukraine. You grew up in the heart of Ukraine. Tell us about your hometown and what brought you, or what life was like before the Army, where you grew up.

## Chapter 2: Growing Up in Poltava



**Ievgen Malik** [9:40]

The time before the Army was casual. Like all guys, school, university abroad, actually.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [9:50]

Oh, actually where was your university?



**Ievgen Malik** [9:52]

In Czech Republic.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [9:53]

Czech Republic.



**Ievgen Malik** [9:53]

Yes. But then-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [9:55]

So you grew up in which town?

## Chapter 3: Studying a Rich History



**Ievgen Malik** [9:57]

I grew up in Poltava city. That is the central part of Ukraine. Yeah, eastern side of Dnipro. The river Dnipro, but still that is the center part and this Poltava region is truly old. The same like Kyiv. Yes. Pereyaslav. Even this city existed, even in Kyiv-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [10:21]

Kyivan Rus



**Ievgen Malik** [10:22]

... Rus. So-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [10:24]

So Poltava has a very interesting history because it's very old. It's actually a smaller city that's speaking, whereas a lot of the bigger cities became speaking during the Soviet period. And it also had a very famous battle there, which [laughs] of course I studied.



**levgen Malik** [10:43]

Yes. This battle with the Swedish troops. Yeah-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [10:50]

I think it was the last battle Sweden's ever fought [laughs].



**levgen Malik** [10:52]

In our region, yes. [laughs] Yeah. Very famous. And what is interesting about the Poltava city, you got there ancient statues.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [11:12]

Statues



**levgen Malik** [11:13]

One statue is for Peter First.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [11:18]

Peter the First.



**levgen Malik** [11:18]

Peter the Great, who won this battle. And the second statue is about Mazepa- ... the Hetman who was fighting against Peter Pervy, Peter the First. So this is... I don't think you can find something like that in any post-Sylvanian city. Like two statues of generals and chiefs who were fighting each other. One won, the second one was defeated, and still he got the statue.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [11:50]

This was the last stand. Yeah, so those were both erected during the Soviet period, which is interesting to show the politics. So Mazepa was the last Hetman, I guess, of Ukraine, the last- ... independent.



**Ievgen Malik** [12:05]

Yes. He was the last independent because after that battle, Moscow just created all these Hetmans-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [12:19]

Yeah. So-



**Ievgen Malik** [12:20]

... by themselves. Before that battle, Kazakhs had a right to elect, actually by democratic elections- ... to elect this Hetman. But after Russians won in Poltava, everything began like in the kingdom. They just send the Hetman.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [12:41]

Yeah. So Ukraine actually joined forces. They had an agreement with Russia, I guess, in 1654 where they kind of joined forces. Russia likes to make a lot more of this agreement. It's widely disputed, the actual terms of the agreement. But it was pretty clear by this period that the Ukrainians, who actually had the first written constitution 80 years before the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution, they were the ones who came up with this concept of democracy. It's actually the first modern practice of democratically... Well, actually, they were under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which also elected their kings. But the Ukrainians were fiercely protective of their rights within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to elect their own leader, and they were the ones who actually did the first written constitution, or first declaration of the rights of a people. And I think that was right after this battle. Pylyp Orlyk wrote that down, or I don't know if it was... I can't remember if it was right before or right after this battle. But it was a kind of statement of what they believed their rights were. And that document's, I think, in Sweden [laughs] ... to this day where the Hetman Mazepa... I think he went into exile after the battle, and he became a fugitive from the Empire. And this was the last free leader, duly elected free leader, until Ukraine was subsumed in the Empire. So I actually wanna go to the town with you one of these days. We need to go take a trip. My wife's from Poltava, or her grandmother is from the Poltava region before her family moved to Kryvyi where she grew up. And I remember they sent us some fruit from Poltava, like some tomatoes, and they were the tastiest, juiciest tomatoes-



**Ievgen Malik** [14:50]

I know



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [14:51]

... I've ever eaten.



**Ievgen Malik** [14:51]  
Big and the pink color.

## Chapter 4: Watching the Nation Change



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [14:54]

Yeah. So just that black earth, that rich soil, amazing produce that you can only find in Ukraine. So it's the heart of Ukraine and also a hugely symbolic city from a historical standpoint. So yeah, you grew up there. I'm not sure how much you were into history growing up, but tell us about what it was like to grow up in Poltava, how you grew up there, obviously after independence. So what was Poltava like when you were growing up, and how did you view yourself, I guess, pre-Maidan and post-Maidan in terms of your identity?



**Ievgen Malik** [15:34]

Well, before Maidan, the year 2014, that was some special period of time in our country. Actually, I wasn't in Poltava. I wasn't in Ukraine at that period of time. I was in the Czech Republic since the year 2010. Actually, what can I say? Before, when I was growing up, my father used to be in the civilian army. We got some friends in Russia. Well, that was so usual and common, like Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians, Georgians, no matter who is from where. Everything was great. But then I was in the Czech Republic at that time, and I got so many friends from Moldova, Azerbaijan, Russia as well. But then this Maidan happened. And that Maidan was totally policy, about policy against this Yanukovych- ... against the president. That was clear. And everyone was great. Actually, we won. Yanukovych retreated. But after that started the situation with the Crimea. And I remember when I was a young guy, I was in high school, and we've seen some videos on YouTube with the military actors who said that Ukraine is gonna have a war probably for sure soon. And when journalists asked, "With whom?" they said, "With Russia, for sure." And we were like, "What? Are you crazy? What are you talking about? That is simply impossible." Well, probably with the aliens we'll have a war faster than with Russians. We are friends, we are brothers. And then, bang, Crimea. And everyone knew what is going on, that they are Russians, and that was so ridiculous actually. Putin was making a view like, "Well, no, this is not me. This is someone else." Like with-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [17:48]

Just people with green men.



**Ievgen Malik** [17:49]

Yeah, just green people. And then, but of course that was Russians. That was obvious. But we just couldn't imagine that. We couldn't believe that that is true, that Russians are trying to occupy our territory. And since that time, everything started for me, because I used to study on the faculty of international political and economical relationships. And I knew a little bit about policy, about government. I started to study the situation in Ukraine and Russia. I started because I can speak the language fluently. And I've seen all these narratives on TV- ... on the internet, et cetera. Well, Putin, actually he's pretty much

levgen Malik (continued)

liberal in his speech to Ukraine. If you listen to the people who are responsible for propaganda, for the history narratives and et cetera, they are much more radical than Putin. So basically when someone says that Putin is a good guy, well maybe Putin is, but the people who are working with him, they are pretty much horrible- ... according to Ukraine and actually other post-Soviet countries- ... as well. For them there is no matter. And I discovered what I haven't seen before, but that was the truth, and then we got this Donbas. There was a war actually. Not like this, of course, not the full-scale invasion, but still that was one way of war. Russia invaded Ukraine, and I understood, I've seen, we still defeated them- ... even at that period of time. We didn't have an army actually. That was so. Officially we got 138,000 soldiers- ... in all armed forces of Ukraine. Now we got something like-

## Chapter 5: Predicting the Coming Invasion



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [20:09]

One-



**levgen Malik** [20:09]

... almost 1 million. Just armed forces. Plus we got National Guard, maybe 200,000 and SBU-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [20:20]

Border guard



**levgen Malik** [20:20]

... et cetera. Yes. So at that period of time we got 138,000- ... at all. What is that? That is like one direction right now. We got, I don't know, five, seven directions. Yeah. So we were not ready to protect our country, but still we did it with the help of volunteers.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [20:44]

This was in 2014, at the beginning?



**levgen Malik** [20:45]

Yeah, yeah. That was the period from 2014 to 2016. And then we got this political situation with the Minsk- ... and any smart person who can count simply on the school level could understand that the war will happen- ... with Russia, that it's gonna be a full-scale invasion. Because-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [21:15]

And that was your assessment looking at it?



**Ievgen Malik** [21:17]

Yeah. I was... I knew that it's gonna happen like that. And when I came back to Ukraine, I-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [21:27]

When did you come back to Ukraine?



**Ievgen Malik** [21:28]

In the year 2015.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [21:31]

Okay, 2015.



**Ievgen Malik** [21:32]

I wanted to join the army- ... at that period of time. But when my parents discovered that, that was so crazy [laughs]. I thought that they would-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [21:44]

We sent you abroad, you should be safe.



**Ievgen Malik** [21:46]

... they would kill me. I thought they would kill me before I would die in Donbas [laughs].



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [21:51]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [21:52]

So I thought, and still that wasn't so bad in Ukraine— ... in that period of time.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [22:01]

Yeah, in 2014, as you said, Ukrainians almost pushed Russia completely out of Ukraine. Then the regular army invaded. And actually, Ukraine was suffering a lot of defeats at the hands of the army in—



**Ievgen Malik** [22:18]

Ilovaisk



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [22:19]

... Ilovaisk in August of 2014, and then in the Battle of Debaltseve in 2015. So the Minsk accords, as we were saying, were not incredibly favorable to Ukraine, but the political leadership at that time made the decision that it was better to stop the fighting, at least the large-scale fighting at that time with the army, than to continue. And the front lines didn't really change that much since January of 2015. There were some movements and flare-ups over the years as you were coming back to Ukraine in 2015. In '16, obviously, there were moments and different battles like Avdiivka and other things. But mainly it was proxy forces supported by special forces and FSB and whoever else their defense intelligence had in here. So that's when you made the decision to join the military—or that's when you came back and first tried to make the decision to join the military and your parents wouldn't let you. So continue with what you did until you joined the military.



**Ievgen Malik** [23:29]

Actually, I was thinking about it all the time. I love the army. I respect it. I did it since I was a child. All my toys were tanks, soldiers, and guns, swords, et cetera. I did sports. I thought that for the first half of my life the army was plan B for me, but the older I grew up, the more I thought that this is going to be plan A. And in the year 2018, I made a decision to join the army. But at that time, I didn't tell my parents. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [24:22]

[laughs] You didn't make the same mistake twice. [laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [24:24]

Exactly. So that was a big surprise. I found, as I—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [24:30]

Now, what did you, just quickly, you came back from university, you studied international affairs. What did you do for the two or three years before you joined the army?



**Ievgen Malik** [24:36]

I was working— ... in my native city in Poltava, but that was not interesting. A civilian job is horrible. I don't know how people survive with it. This is something unbelievable. [laughs] I lived like that for two years. Till the very end I didn't even know, is that two years or one year? Where is the second year? [laughs] ... that was lost. I was working just from 8:00 to 5:00 every day.

## Chapter 6: Enlisting in the Marines



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [25:07]

It was at an advertising agency, right?



**Ievgen Malik** [25:09]

Exactly. So that was not interesting for me. And then I decided that that's it. That's enough. The war is going to happen. I like the army. What am I doing here? I have to make a decision. And I spoke to my friend. I tried to find a truly combat battalion. And my friend said, "Well, there is one, the special one, the First Separate Marine Battalion." And I was like, "Wow, Marines." I knew in Ukraine everyone knows about airborne troops— ... because they are pretty popular in Ukraine. But I didn't like airborne because you have to jump with a parachute. I don't really see, even then I didn't see any reason to use this. How can you use it on the battlefield? Well, the Russians showed that. That is not very effective. And even then I knew that it is not effective. But I wanted to join some assault troops and marine troops. Exactly. That was... And this First Separate Battalion, that is the oldest battalion of marine infantry of Ukraine. So when I discovered that they exist, I didn't think a lot. I just went to Mykolaiv city— ... and signed a contract. I came back home, just made my parents glad, showed them this paper, and that's it. [laughs] So since July 2018— ... my army life started.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [26:58]

So what was that like for



**Ievgen Malik** [27:07]

Uh, well, that was interesting, of course, and, uh, not bad. I think, uh, well, first of all, you have to understand when you join the army, uh, you're always, uh, you know, you are waiting for something special and unbelievable as if you're gonna become like Rambo or-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [27:31]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [27:32]

... what's name from Commandos. But the truth is not like that.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [27:34]

It's not the movies.



**levgen Malik** [27:35]

Yes. Yes. That's not about the movies, uh, uh, totally. Uh, but still that is about discipline. That is about, uh, uh, ruling your life and, uh, taking responsibility, and still that is much more interesting, uh, than the civil life. Uh, because, uh, in army, you know, you... In army you have to take the responsibility which you would never have in your civil life, 'cause no one will give to the 25-year-old boy a BTR which costs like \$150,000. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [28:18]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [28:18]

Uh, so-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [28:19]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [28:19]

... but, and you have to be responsible for that, and that can kill actually. That got a machine gun. So you have to, uh, take care about the, uh, about your team. You, you have to be responsible for all of that. Uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [28:35]

Your people and your equipment. I'm-



**levgen Malik** [28:37]

Of course. Yeah. So-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [28:38]

I remember when I was a platoon leader signing for something like \$10 million worth of equipment was, I was responsible for and it's-



**Ievgen Malik** [28:43]

Yes. So, so-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [28:44]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [28:44]

... uh, that makes you, uh, like to be in all this, uh, situation, to work, to s- to make your brain work, uh, and et cetera. So, uh, that, that is, uh, much more interesting than the civil life for sure. And, uh, uh, I was, I got, uh, two months of basic trainings-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:08]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [29:09]

... uh, in a camp of, uh, m- marines. Uh, that was not like a Marine Corps, but, uh, uh, Nevsky-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:17]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [29:17]

... I think. Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:17]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [29:18]

But after that I got to this, uh, uh, to, to my battalion.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:22]  
Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [29:22]  
And I remember that first half year I got just polygon, polygon, polygons.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:28]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [29:28]  
Shooting, fighting, writing, uh, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:30]  
So polygon is, is, is the range. Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [29:33]  
Yes. Yes. So I got like... And, uh, what [laughs] that was so funny 'cause I got, uh, one friend, uh, he, he got to mar- uh, marine brigade-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:45]  
Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [29:45]  
... as well, but he got to, he was, uh, uh, going to join to the marine brigade-

## Chapter 7: Enduring the Harsh Training



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:50]  
Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [29:50]  
... 36th Brigade, and I was going to join to this First Separate Marine Battalion. Uh, and the battalion was like infantry battalion.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [29:59]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [29:59]

And brigade, marine brigade, you got different kind of troops there. And I don't remember, uh, where he joined, but not to inf- infantry. And in four months, uh, we got a call, uh, to each other. I said like, "Hey, buddy, how are you?" He said, "Oh, great. So perfect. And, uh, I, I w- I'm serving in base. My h- flat is like five minutes from here. I just walk around and-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [30:24]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [30:25]

... do nothing. So it's, that is so perfect. And what about you?" And I am on polygon with the, my machine gun, like sleeping together.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [30:33]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [30:33]

Uh, already th- there is, there is a winter and, uh, [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [30:37]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [30:37]

... we don't have any, any even fire like, [laughs] you know. So-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [30:41]

And, and, and you're, you're thinking, "I joined the right unit," and he's obviously thinking the same thing.



**levgen Malik** [30:45]

Ex- exactly. Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [30:45]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [30:45]

I was think like, "Oh my God, what I, what have I done?" [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [30:50]

Yeah. Yeah. It's, uh, it's difficult when you go out, um, when you're in those tough situations, really cold or, or tired or wet or whatever. It's, uh- Uh, sometimes you're wondering why you chose it, but, um-



**levgen Malik** [31:03]

Yes. That, that, that was unbelievable. But, uh, I did it because I wanted to prepare myself, and I did it.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:12]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [31:13]

This battalion helped me-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:14]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [31:15]

... a lot. Uh, I changed myself for sure.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:19]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [31:20]

I become much stronger, and just because of that, I survived.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:23]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [31:23]

That's for 100%.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:25]

Because you chose the toughest unit, you survived combat.



**levgen Malik** [31:27]

Exactly, yeah. Uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:29]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [31:29]

... because, uh, i- if, if I, you know, if I would got to this captivity-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:34]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [31:35]

... mm, being mobilized civilian guy-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:37]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [31:38]  
... I would kill myself.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [31:40]  
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, the, um... A lot of people, when they join the army, um... You know, I'm, I'm, I, I served in the ca- armored cavalry when it was, you know, elite armored formation, and you always wanna go to the best unit that's most challenging. Yeah, you're gonna have the toughest fights, but a lot of times you think you have a better, better chance of fighting and winning and surviving, uh, if you're in a really good unit than, than one-



**Ievgen Malik** [32:04]  
Of course



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [32:04]  
... that's, uh, not quite as, as well trained and disciplined, so. That's why t- today even, um, when a lot of people, w- instead of getting mobilized, they'll volunteer so they can join some of the better units in the Armed Forces, which is an option. Um, so when's the first time you went to the front lines, uh, as a marine? I know that before 2022, there were, uh, tours of duty, uh, on the front. What, what was your first?



**Ievgen Malik** [32:31]  
I got two rotations, uh, before the full-scale invasion, uh, in the year 2019.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [32:36]  
Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [32:37]  
And in the year 2021. Yes. Each of them was half a year.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [32:44]  
Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [32:45]  
So half a year, uh, in the front line once and second time, and, uh, first time I was, uh, just a mariner-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [32:54]

Mm



**Ievgen Malik** [32:54]

... machine gunner. Second time I was a squad leader, so I got my own position with, uh, 10 people.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:00]

You were sergeant.



**Ievgen Malik** [33:01]

Exactly.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:01]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [33:02]

Yeah. Uh, so I developed. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:06]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [33:06]

Uh, each time I developed, uh, and that was great, uh, because-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:09]

And which part of the front line were you serving in when you went there?



**Ievgen Malik** [33:12]

Always that was Sector M, Mariupol direction.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:15]

Okay



**Ievgen Malik** [33:15]

All the time. That was a well-known place, uh, for mariners.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:20]

The marines.



**Ievgen Malik** [33:20]

Yeah. Uh, you could find there or mariners or, um, these mountains, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:29]

Uh-huh



**Ievgen Malik** [33:29]

... mount- mountain riflemen.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:31]

The



**Ievgen Malik** [33:31]

Yeah. Uh, we got brigade, Brigade Number 10 and Brigade Number 128. Actually Brigade w- Number 128, the, this brigade from Zakarpattia region-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:42]

Zakarpattia



**Ievgen Malik** [33:42]

... a very old, ancient brigade, and they were truly strong.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [33:46]

Yeah. Yeah. So you, you'd mo- you'd, uh, ro- rotated through the Mariupol sector and, and we talked about this before. Um, coming into 2022, uh, what, what was your, uh, battalion doing? Were they still... And, and at this point, had you moved to the 36 Marines or you're still in the 1st Marine Battalion?



**Ievgen Malik** [34:06]

Uh, the situation is that, uh, 1st Separate Battalion is one of, uh, infantry bat- uh, one of out of three ba- infantry battalions of 36 Marine Brigade.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:17]

Okay. So just one of the battalion-



**Ievgen Malik** [34:19]

Yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:19]

... infantry battalions.



**Ievgen Malik** [34:19]

We are separate because we got a separate base.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:22]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [34:23]

Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:24]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [34:24]

That was the situation.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:26]

So were you, was your battalion on the front lines at that point, or, or were they, um, off the front lines, uh, leading up to the full-scale invasion?



**Ievgen Malik** [34:35]

I think we were exactly on the front line, and, uh, the situation is that, uh, my battalion was on the front line from the very beginning of the year 2022.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:46]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [34:46]

So before the full-scale invasion, the guys were there approximately two or even three months.

## Chapter 8: Canceling a Planned Vacation



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:51]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [34:51]

I was not on the front line because I got, uh, courses.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:56]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [34:56]

Special courses, uh, in Desna.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [34:59]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [35:00]

That is, uh, some study center-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:03]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [35:03]

... I think. Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:03]

Training center.



**Ievgen Malik** [35:04]

Training center.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:05]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [35:05]

And after that training center, I got, uh, a deal with my commander of my platoon that I'm gonna have a vacation. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:15]

In... Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [35:16]

Yes. In February. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:18]

February. [laughs] Okay.



**levgen Malik** [35:20]

Yes. Uh, this date, 24th of February, the year 2022, I have booked already a number in, uh, Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:31]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [35:31]

So I had to be on the sea-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:33]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [35:33]

... actually lying, like somewhere there, having a rest. But, uh, there were everything clear. Like, uh, we got all this news on TV. I was watching it, and I thought like, "Yeah, probably I'm not gonna go there."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [35:49]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [35:49]

And my commander, I just remember, that was a Monday. My commander wrote a message text, uh, uh, on Telegram to me that, "Do not hurry up with your vacation, with your trip." I said, "Yeah, of course. I understand that." And, uh, I just went to sleep.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:05]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [36:05]

I got a dream.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:07]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [36:07]

And I woke up on Tuesday morning, and I understood that I'm not gonna sh- go to Sharm el-Sheikh for sure. [laughs] And, uh, my, uh, in half an hour, my commander of my platoon wrote a message, just, uh, "Take your stuff and come to Mariupol."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:21]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [36:22]

That's it. Um-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:23]

And where were you at that point?



**Ievgen Malik** [36:25]

Again?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:25]

Where were you at that time?



**Ievgen Malik** [36:26]

Poltava.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:27]

You were in Poltava.



**Ievgen Malik** [36:28]

My, my native, uh, city. Uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:30]

Uh-huh



**Ievgen Malik** [36:30]

... I, uh, I visited my mom, and, uh, I told her to get, uh, some stuff.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:37]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [36:38]

Some bag for, you know, this, uh, 72 hours bag.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:42]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [36:43]

Uh, yeah. And, uh, I, I went to Mariupol by bus.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [36:47]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [36:48]

I bought the ticket and went to Mariupol. And I remember I was, uh, riding there to this city, and I r- read the news, and I've seen that all this, you know, pro-, uh, politic- policy makers in Ukraine They were escaping from Ukraine-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:05]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [37:05]

... by their private planes-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:07]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [37:08]  
... to Spain, to Italy, to Russia-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:11]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [37:11]  
... whatever. And-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:12]  
This is on the 23rd or 24th?



**levgen Malik** [37:14]  
No, that was like one week before.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:16]  
One week before.



**levgen Malik** [37:17]  
Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:17]  
Okay.



**levgen Malik** [37:17]  
And, uh, uh, I read this news and I was smiling. I, I thought like, who is this silly in this situation, me or them? [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:27]  
[laughs] You-



**Ievgen Malik** [37:28]  
Uh, yeah



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:28]  
... you're driving to Mariupol and they're all flying out of the country.



**Ievgen Malik** [37:31]  
Exactly, yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:32]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [37:32]  
So well, uh, I came to the Mariupol probably, yeah, one week before the full scale invasion. Uh, and we started-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:41]  
So-



**Ievgen Malik** [37:41]  
... to prepare



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:42]  
... so you left your, your mom. Was your, is your father, uh, still in-



**Ievgen Malik** [37:45]  
Uh, my, my mom was in Poltava. Father was in Kyiv.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:49]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [37:49]

They are, are divorced.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:50]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [37:51]

And, uh, yeah, but still all of them w- were in, uh, Ukraine.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:55]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [37:55]

And brother was in Kyiv a- as well.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [37:58]

Yeah. And, um, what did your mother say? Was she, uh, was she worried that the, the war was gonna start or?



**Ievgen Malik** [38:05]

Uh, as I said, I knew that it's gonna start and, uh, I s- told that to all my friends, to all my relatives. Uh, they said, no, y- th- th- this is something you are not the specialized.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:19]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [38:19]

Uh, how can you know this?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:20]

You're just, you're just a dumb marine sergeant. [laughs]



**levgen Malik** [38:22]

Yes, exactly. So when I went, well, I don't even remember even what said, my mom said, but, well, she was upset-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:32]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [38:32]

... of course, but she didn't show that because-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:34]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [38:34]

... she is really strong. And, uh, she knew, uh, that like, yeah, if your son is mariner-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:41]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [38:42]

... then something like that can happen.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:44]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [38:45]

Whatever happen, marines and air- airborne, they are the first who go.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:51]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [38:51]

So yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:53]

Yeah. So you get to Mariupol and, and actually you're at, you were in a, were you in the same battalion as Sean Pinner? Um-



**Ievgen Malik** [38:59]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [38:59]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [39:00]

He was in a airborne company, I think.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:03]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [39:03]

And I was in the second infantry company.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:06]

So J- so Sean was in the double, double crazy [laughs] airborne company.



**Ievgen Malik** [39:09]

Yes. Everyone knew that this airborne company is totally crazy because-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:14]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [39:14]  
... they got the craziest surgeons there. And, uh, I wanted to go to airborne, uh, company as well because, you know, everyone said that they are the best, but then I discovered that they, they are the craziest. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:26]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [39:26]  
You know? Uh, because if you are marine and are in airborne company of, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:32]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [39:32]  
... marine battalion, then, uh, you will, you, you simply, this is like a captivity-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:38]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [39:39]  
... but in your own country. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:42]  
So, so, uh, and we're gonna, we're gonna have Sean on a- another episode-



**Ievgen Malik** [39:45]  
Yeah, yeah. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:46]

... and talk about his, his story 'cause he's actually the one who, uh, introduced me to you actually right after you left captivity.

## Chapter 9: Translating for Foreign Volunteers



**Ievgen Malik** [39:52]

Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [39:52]

I'm really glad he, he did. Um, so, uh, did you know Sean well or at that point or?



**Ievgen Malik** [39:58]

No. I knew more Ridley-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:01]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [40:01]

... because I was a translator, uh, when Ridley came-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:05]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [40:06]

... as a volunteer.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:06]

Dan- Daniel Ridley or?



**Ievgen Malik** [40:07]

Uh, I think, yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:09]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [40:09]

I don't know his second name.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:10]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [40:10]

I know his first name.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:11]

Ridley.



**Ievgen Malik** [40:12]

I, I remember that time, uh, my commander of my company was a main officer of base. Uh, he was on duty like.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:19]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [40:20]

And, uh, he called me by radio station, uh, because I lived on, uh, the base territory at that time.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:27]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [40:27]

I was a mariner. I didn't have apartments. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:29]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [40:30]

And he said like, "Come to me." I came like, and he said like, "Look, there is some, some guy foreigner."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:37]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [40:37]

"He's just, he says something we don't understand [laughs] what does he want."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:41]

He's speaking with an accent, which is-



**Ievgen Malik** [40:43]

Yes, yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:43]

... impossible to understand. [laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [40:44]

That is impossible to understand. Go and speak to him what is going on.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:47]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [40:48]

I came and he said like, "Hey, hello. My name is Ridley. I want to join to your battalion."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:53]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [40:53]  
And I was like, "What?" [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [40:55]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [40:56]  
"Du- dude, where are you from?" "I'm from Britain." "What? Like [laughs] what are you doing here?" Well, okay, but he, he's cool guy and, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:05]  
Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [41:05]  
... Sean, all of them, they were good.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:07]  
Yeah. There were, I, I guess about 10 foreigners in the marines or?



**Ievgen Malik** [41:11]  
Yeah, something like that. There was one guy from Uzbekistan, another guy from Croatia, and others from Great Britain, I think.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:19]  
Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So, uh, talk me through what happened, um, when the war started. Uh, you, you, you get to Mariupol a few days before. When do you go out to the front lines? Um...



**Ievgen Malik** [41:32]  
I came from the Mariupol, I came directly to frontline to the position and, um-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:38]

And you're in charge of 10 people at this point, or how big was your, your leadership?



**Ievgen Malik** [41:41]

I joined to the position of commander of my platoon.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:45]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [41:46]

So I just helped him. Uh, we got our platoon was responsible for two positions.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:53]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [41:53]

And, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:54]

And how big was the platoon?



**Ievgen Malik** [41:57]

Approximately 20 people.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [41:58]

20 people. So you were like-



**Ievgen Malik** [42:00]

18, 19



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:00]

... the platoon sergeant. You were like the-



**Ievgen Malik** [42:02]

Uh, well, I, I, I was a squad leader because we got, uh, technically we got, uh, three squads in the platoon.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:10]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [42:10]

Oh, I'm sorry. We got three positions.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:13]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [42:13]

Yeah. Uh, I see. Uh, Platoon, Amazonka, and Nepal-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:20]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [42:20]

... probably. Uh, so three positions and, uh, the thing is that-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:25]

And these were like strong points or these were like s- each squad had their own s-strong point?



**Ievgen Malik** [42:29]

Yes. Yes. We got, uh, one, uh, point, uh, and, uh, we got like approximately four or five hundred meters between the points.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:41]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [42:41]

And I, I got, I was with, uh, my, uh, platoon leader, uh, on one point.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [42:48]

So your platoon was, was guarding a sector that was about one and a half kilometers, one point, one to one and a half kilometers.



**Ievgen Malik** [42:53]

Yeah. I, I think one kilometer app- app- approximately. One kilometer, one and 200 maximum.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:00]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:00]

Yes. That was like that.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:01]

And, and, um, how far away from Mariupol were you? You were, uh, what on the northeast or east side, or-



**Ievgen Malik** [43:10]

East. Northeast. Yeah, because, uh, we got, as I said before, in our brigade, we got three battalions.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:17]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:17]

And, uh, like, uh, our battalion was the north one.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:24]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:24]

Then goes battalion 501.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:28]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:28]

And then battalion without the number that was like a line, uh, uh, infantry battalion of brigade.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:35]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:36]

So, and th- they were connected to Azov Sea.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:40]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:40]

Yes. Uh, then-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:44]

And, and who, who was to the other side of your battalion? Was there any units?



**Ievgen Malik** [43:49]

Brigade number 53.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:50]  
Brigade 53.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:51]  
Land forces.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:53]  
Got it.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:53]  
A mechanized brigade.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:54]  
Mechanized brigade.



**Ievgen Malik** [43:55]  
Exactly. Uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [43:56]  
So they were, like, going up towards-



**Ievgen Malik** [43:58]  
To the north because the line was from this Azov Sea to the north, and-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:02]  
To Avdiivka area.



**Ievgen Malik** [44:03]  
Yeah, exactly. To Donetsk and further, uh, to the, the, then it turns to the eastern part to the border.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:12]

Mm-hmm. Got it. So, so your brigade sector was how big, uh, approximately? Was it about-



**Ievgen Malik** [44:20]

I think-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:21]

... 20 kilometers, 10, 15?



**Ievgen Malik** [44:23]

No, more. More.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:23]

Yeah. Like 30 kilometers?



**Ievgen Malik** [44:24]

I think maybe 30, yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:25]

30 kilometers. So 30 kilometers from the Azov Sea all the way up to-



**Ievgen Malik** [44:30]

To the-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:31]

The-



**Ievgen Malik** [44:31]

... north part. The, the, the fir- the, the last north point.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:35]

Okay. So how, how, how well did you understand the situation among the other units around you? Or, or were you just really, really focused on your platoon? What was your understanding?



**Ievgen Malik** [44:46]

We understood everything. Like, you don't need to be a, I don't know, a-

## Chapter 10: Mapping the Danger Zone



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [44:52]

Senior officer



**Ievgen Malik** [44:53]

... superman specialized to understand that you are in the [laughs] ass actually. I'm sorry, of course, but that was- ... so obvious, and that is the minimum. How can I describe this situation? Because when we got... There was only one road- ... from this Donetsk Republic, Federation, Donetsk Republic to Mariupol. And that road was crossing our position-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [45:26]

Okay. So you-



**Ievgen Malik** [45:27]

... of my platoon.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [45:27]

So you were-



**Ievgen Malik** [45:28]

So that was the-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [45:28]

You were defending the main road



**levgen Malik** [45:30]

... that was the only place where the tanks could go. So [laughs] when we understood that the war is gonna happen, and we were studying the map with my commander of my platoon, and he understood what is going on, what is gonna be. First of all, he became red, then he becomes blue, and then gray, and then he got all the colors on his face.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [45:52]

On the spectrum, yeah.



**levgen Malik** [45:53]

Yes. And I just understood that if we will survive the first two or three days, that's gonna be a miracle.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [46:04]

So which highway was this that comes straight to Mariupol from Donetsk People's Republic as they called it?



**levgen Malik** [46:12]

I don't remember the name of this highway, but-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [46:15]

So it's the major highway?



**levgen Malik** [46:17]

Not the major one. But the battalion had a line. And there was just one road. And-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [46:27]

In the whole sector?



**levgen Malik** [46:28]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [46:28]

And your platoon's-



**Ievgen Malik** [46:29]

Of our battalion. And our platoon was in front of this road. [laughs] So if tanks are going, tanks do not go across this land- ... because it's too hard, especially since that was the end of February. So that was so wet, and that was- ... simply impossible for the-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [46:48]

The ground had not frozen over



**Ievgen Malik** [46:50]

... yes, to move through the fields. So they needed some roads, and there was only one road, and we knew that. And [laughs] so we got just one anti-tank rocket launcher.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:04]

Just one?



**Ievgen Malik** [47:05]

Just one.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:05]

And which make was it? Soviet one or-



**Ievgen Malik** [47:08]

That was one.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:09]

One.



**Ievgen Malik** [47:10]

Krasnopol.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:11]  
Krasnopol.



**Ievgen Malik** [47:11]  
Pretty good actually.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:12]  
And how many rounds did you have for it, or how much ammunition? Is it just one shot or how many- ... for the Krasnopol?



**Ievgen Malik** [47:23]  
I think, I don't know for sure, maybe six or eight rockets.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:27]  
So you had about eight rockets with one launching system.



**Ievgen Malik** [47:31]  
Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:31]  
What other weapons did your platoon have?



**Ievgen Malik** [47:35]  
Probably four NLAWs, or two or four. I don't know.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:38]  
Four NLAWs, British NLAWs.



**Ievgen Malik** [47:39]  
Maximum four. On my position with the commander of platoon, we got two for sure. Then we got the Shakal, which is an old, very old Slovenian machine gun.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:53]

What's the caliber on that again?



**Ievgen Malik** [47:54]

12.7. Something like a Browning.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [47:58]

So kind of like a .50 cal, yeah. So a big machine gun that can take out light armored vehicles.



**Ievgen Malik** [48:03]

Yes. Light vehicles. This is very important. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [48:07]

Not armored, just light vehicles.



**Ievgen Malik** [48:09]

Yes, exactly. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [48:09]

The .50 cal can sometimes-



**Ievgen Malik** [48:12]

Then because sometimes commanders give you this machine gun and say, "Well-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [48:17]

Take out that tank. [laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [48:18]

... yes. 'You see, this is really good stuff. [laughs] You can manage.' But you can't. [laughs] Then we got SPG-9. That is an anti-tank grenade launcher. Slovenian as well.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [48:34]

And how many grenades for that?



**Ievgen Malik** [48:37]

A lot.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [48:38]

A lot. Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [48:39]

But you cannot stop a modernized, modern tank by that. A very old Slovenian one or a BMP. One second. No matter. Then we got RPG and PKM, of course, but that is-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [48:59]

And how many PKMs?



**Ievgen Malik** [49:01]

Three PKMs.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [49:04]

So three crew-served machine guns.



**Ievgen Malik** [49:06]

Yes. And three grenade launchers, RPG-7. Yeah. But that is the casual equipment of an infantry squad. One machine gun, one-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [49:20]

RPG



**Ievgen Malik** [49:20]

... grenade launcher. And also we had to have this BTR- ... 80, three of them.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [49:29]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [49:29]

Or three or two, I don't remember exactly. But, uh, we, we didn't have it on our positions because, uh, due to, uh, this, uh, Minsk agreement.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [49:40]

Mm-hmm. You weren't allowed.



**Ievgen Malik** [49:41]

Yeah, we were not allowed.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [49:43]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [49:43]

That, that was so funny because they got tanks already in front of us, and we are not allowed to have BTR-80. [laughs]

## Chapter 11: Surviving the Early Shelling



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [49:49]

Okay, so this is important. So before the war, Ukraine politically, militarily made the decision that we're not gonna do anything to violate the Minsk agreements. But, but the side-



**Ievgen Malik** [50:01]

Yeah



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:02]

... is clearly violating it. From what point did they start bringing up their armored vehicles?



**levgen Malik** [50:07]

I know for sure that on 22nd February, we were bombed by mines and SPG-9 and the Shkhval, uh, all of that. They started to work, like, daily.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:18]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [50:18]

And that was the first time we got this, uh, s- such kind of experience. And that, that [laughs] was the day, like, you know, we got this mines-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:28]

So this is two days before the full scale



**levgen Malik** [50:29]

Yes, two days before, so they started to work. Uh, that, and w- for, for us, they used, like, mines 82 millimeters.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:38]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [50:39]

You know, and for us that-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:39]

Is that mortar, mortars?



**levgen Malik** [50:40]

Mortars, yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:41]

Mortars, yeah. Mortar rounds, yeah.



**levgen Malik** [50:42]

Exactly. And for us, that was something like, "Wow, wow!"



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:46]

Heavy, heavy, this is heavy stuff



**levgen Malik** [50:47]

Yes. But-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:49]

Because that was banned according to the Minsk agreements, right?



**levgen Malik** [50:51]

Yes, of course



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:52]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [50:53]

But fur- and further, you know, uh, in, in one week, we didn't even like, you know, what is it?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [50:58]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [50:59]

18, 82 mis- Oh.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:00]

Go to sleep [laughs]



**levgen Malik** [51:01]  
Yeah, go to sleep, like.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:02]  
Yeah [laughs]



**levgen Malik** [51:02]  
That was nothing. But at the first time, we, we were like, "Wow, look at that."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:07]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [51:07]  
"How strong is that?" [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:10]  
[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [51:10]  
Oh, yes. So what happened, uh, I remember that was like, you know, we were waiting and e- every night we got this, um, not, not sirina, command, uh, that, that we had to, uh, go to the positions.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:29]  
Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [51:30]  
You know, to prepare for the fight.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:32]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [51:32]

Every night. We didn't sleep, uh, maybe three hours per night-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:38]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [51:38]

... a day, every day. And, um, then I remember that time, uh, we got-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:44]

So, so you, you go to the positions at night, and they'd say, "Hey, you need to be ready for the attack tonight."



**levgen Malik** [51:49]

Yes, exactly



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:49]

So, so then maybe h- half of the soldiers could sleep at one time, right?



**levgen Malik** [51:55]

No, if you got this, uh,



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:57]

Or nobody was sleeping-



**levgen Malik** [51:58]

No one sleeps



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [51:58]

... the whole night



**levgen Malik** [51:58]

Because it's like, uh, this is a command that, that is used i- in case the regiment, the, the recon says that-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:07]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [52:07]

... the, the enemy is prepared to attack right now. So no, nobody sleeps



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:11]

So this is what? Three days before every night?



**levgen Malik** [52:13]

Uh, every night, two, three nights before.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:16]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [52:17]

And, uh, that was like the, the night, yeah, 20, 24th when, uh, we got an internet on the positions still.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:29]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [52:29]

And, uh, my friend, he showed like, "Look," he showed the, on Telegram video-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:35]

Air space



**levgen Malik** [52:35]

... with, with Putin.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:37]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [52:37]

Where he says like, "We recognize all these republics. We will help. We will fight," and et cetera. And we were like, "Well, here it is."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [52:48]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [52:48]

And, uh, in maybe 20, 30 minutes, we got this, uh, command to be ready to at, for attack. That was half past 2:00 AM-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:02]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [53:02]

... at night.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:03]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [53:03]

Basically. And we stand, like we were watching in, into the field to the enemy side. And that was the first time when we saw the MLRS Grad started to work everywhere, you know? From different points we start, we saw this, uh, clouds of... We, we didn't know what is it.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:24]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [53:25]

And then we heard like, [makes whooshing sound] all this stuff, rockets through our heads. They started to bomb, uh, position of our company, position of our battalion.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:35]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [53:35]

Uh, exactly as, as staff company-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:38]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [53:38]

... and staff battalion



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:38]

The headquarters



**Ievgen Malik** [53:39]

Yeah. They, they, uh, destroyed all our links to... The, the phones did not work. Uh, we got this, the, the only radio station which worked were Harris.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:51]

Yeah, Harris. US, uh-



**Ievgen Malik** [53:53]

Exactly.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [53:53]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [53:53]

Yes. Uh, and they started to bomb us, uh, by Gvozdika, uh, that is, uh, 122 millimeters, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:05]

Mortars



**Ievgen Malik** [54:05]

... artillery system. Not mortars, yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:06]

Oh, artillery. Okay, yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [54:08]

Uh, and then, uh, I think Akatsya as well, that is 122 millimeters as well. Something like Paladin-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:15]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [54:15]

... in Russia.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:16]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [54:16]

Or in United States. [laughs] And-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:19]  
152 or 100 and-



**levgen Malik** [54:20]  
152-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:21]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [54:21]  
... because the civilian, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:23]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [54:23]  
... millimeters



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:24]  
Yeah. So that's heavy artillery



**levgen Malik** [54:27]  
Yes, yes. And then, uh, what happened, like they bombed us approximately four hours, I think.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:34]  
Four hours



**levgen Malik** [54:35]  
Four, five hours. And we-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:37]

Where, where... Was any of the artillery directly on your position or it was just, uh-



**levgen Malik** [54:41]

No, I, I don't know. Well, I, I know that we got alter- artillery in our brigade. We got, uh, 12, uh, Gvozdika, as I said.

## Chapter 12: Awaiting the Armored Advance



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:50]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [54:51]

122 millimeters and approximately six, uh, MLRS Grad.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:56]

So you guys were also shooting back at that point



**levgen Malik** [54:58]

I, I'm not sure. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [54:59]

You're not sure. [laughs]



**levgen Malik** [55:01]

[laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:01]

Yeah. But, but so they were, they were, uh, going mainly after the company and battalion points, or were they also hitting the frontline positions too?



**levgen Malik** [55:08]

No, behind, of course. Behind



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:10]

Behind. Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [55:11]

Artillery always stands behind people-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:12]

Okay



**Ievgen Malik** [55:12]

... because it's, that's irrational.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:15]

No, no. But, but the artillery was, was-



**Ievgen Malik** [55:17]

Ah, artillery, yeah, we w- 300 meters.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:20]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [55:20]

[laughs] Uh, that was the, the minimal position where... But they, they just, you know, Grad, it comes to the position-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:29]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [55:30]

... shot, and goes back in one, two minutes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:34]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [55:34]

That's it.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:35]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [55:35]

He doesn't need a lot.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [55:36]

Yeah. So you knew it was coming. You're on the main only avenue of approach that m- that is mounted, meaning this is where all the armored vehicles are gonna be coming, and your platoon's waiting for that. Uh, what was your thought process at that point, and how were the, how were the guys in the platoon react in all this? 'Cause you're out of communication aside from one radio.



**Ievgen Malik** [55:59]

We, like, we didn't know. We didn't understand.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:03]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [56:04]

Because you cannot prepare all this, uh, military trainings you got, that's... It doesn't prepare you to the real fight-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:16]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [56:16]

... anyway because you don't know what to do with the thing. You got AK-74. What can you do to the thing?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:23]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [56:23]

Like, what should you do?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:25]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [56:25]

You can do anything you want, but you will not stop it. So that is as if, like, you go right now to fight with Klitschko-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:32]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [56:32]

... uh, in the boxing ground. Like, what would you do?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:35]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [56:35]

You can do anything you want, but you will not win-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:38]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [56:38]

... of course. Yeah. Uh, so we were just... But, but we got the command-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:44]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [56:45]

... to stand. Okay, no problems. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:48]

Stand and fight. Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [56:49]

Yes. Um, and I remember the situation was, like, uh, we got run out of energy in Huris.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:57]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [56:57]

So we-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [56:58]

The batteries.



**Ievgen Malik** [56:58]

Yeah, yeah. Uh, we needed to reload the batteries, and, uh... But that was pretty much dangerous to go because, uh, uh, drones controlled the, uh, space, and if they saw anything, they used mortars and artillery systems to attack.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:17]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [57:17]

No matter is it one soldier or is it, like, machine we-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:22]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [57:22]

... vehicle or something.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:23]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [57:23]

They, they use just mortars and artillery all the time. Uh, so I took the, um, this radio station's, uh, batteries, uh, and, uh, went to the, uh, left position of our company 'cause they got the regenerator-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:44]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [57:44]

... which could work with the petrol.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:46]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [57:47]

And they were the only... That was the only position with the electricity-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:52]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [57:52]

... due to it. I, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [57:55]

So did you go by yourself to that position or?



**levgen Malik** [57:58]

Me and another mariner. Uh, two of us, we took the batteries from all the three positions of our platoon and went to that position.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:06]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [58:07]

And, uh, when I came there, we, uh, there, there, there was my old friend, sergeant as well. Uh, we spoke like, "How, how is it going on?" And he, he was more, uh, like, experienced than me because he used to serve, uh, in this third regiment of special force before, and he was in Ilovaisk as well.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:29]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [58:29]

And he said, "Well, man, we are done." [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:34]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [58:34]

Like, you know, don't even think about, like it's gonna be the... This is the end, like, [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:39]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [58:39]  
But he told me that, uh, you know, by one way-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:42]  
Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [58:42]  
... of course, not in, uh, not with the mari- other mariners-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:46]  
Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [58:47]  
... uh, because you, you can't save them-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [58:48]  
Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [58:49]  
... such things. And, but, but to me he said, yeah, because we got good, uh, like, um, uh, cooperation. Uh, he said that, "Dude, we are totally done. I'm telling you." [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:00]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [59:00]  
That is even, that is gonna be even worser than Ilovaisk.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:04]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [59:05]

Uh, and I-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:06]

So I- Ilovaisk was a battle where Ukraine, forces were surrounded and then-



**Ievgen Malik** [59:11]

Yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:11]

... uh-



**Ievgen Malik** [59:12]

More than 600, uh, casualties-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:14]

Casualties, yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [59:14]

... per one night.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:15]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [59:16]

So, uh, what was further, I, I said like... And I used to be on his position before.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:24]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [59:24]

That was my first rotation on this position. And I said like, "Let me go with you. I want just to see how does it change."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:31]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [59:31]

How did it change. And, uh, he showed me all the positions, and I saw, like, really good position, you know. And, uh, i- in some case he, he said like, "Yeah, very good, but very close to, uh, Russians." I said, "Yeah, I, I know. I remember. 400 meters."

## Chapter 13: Spotting the Enemy Tanks



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:49]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [59:49]

He said, "No, 300 meters. Here are their tanks."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [59:52]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [59:52]

And I said, "What?" [laughs] He said, "Yeah, tanks, 300 meters." I said like, "No, this is a joke. That is impossible." He said, "No, here's the hill. Just go up and watch." And I said like, "What are you talking about? You, you don't know [laughs] how tanks loo- does look like." I just went up to the hill. I just put up my head and three shots by tanks, and I got down. [laughs] And I was like, "What the hell?"



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:00:20]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:00:20]

Like he said tanks, like bro. [laughs] And, and that was the moment the attack started because, uh, I heard, uh, tanks started, tanks started to shoot on, um, in the area of my platoon. And, um, in, in radio stations I heard, like, my friend, uh, Yaroslav-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:00:42]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:00:43]

... he start scream like, "Tanks are coming." And the fight started-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:00:47]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:00:47]

... actually of all our company. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:00:50]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:00:50]

Yeah, so that... And that was, uh, already half past 2:00 PM.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:00:57]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:00:59]

So middle day approximately.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:01]

So, so the artillery barrage started at what? 4:30 AM?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:01:05]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:06]

So they had-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:01:06]

No, artillery, artillery started to work at, uh, 2:30 AM.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:11]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:01:11]

And s- they finished at 6:30 AM-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:14]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:01:14]

... approximately. And in six hours they started to attack.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:18]

Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:01:18]

They started this land, uh, force operation by tanks and infantry and, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:23]

So they lifted their artillery at that point?



**levgen Malik** [1:01:25]

Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:26]

Okay.



**levgen Malik** [1:01:27]

Like that.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:27]

Okay. So six hours, and it takes them six hours to reach the positions? Um-



**levgen Malik** [1:01:35]

I think they, uh, they were on the position as well-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:39]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:01:39]

... or already. But, uh, I, I think, uh, because they are Russians-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:46]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:01:46]

... you know, w- when they prepare some operation, at the last time, y- they discover that they didn't do something [laughs] very-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:01:55]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:01:55]

... uh, so- something what they need, and, uh, that, that's like, oh, my God, we forget this, we forget that.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:03]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:03]

Well, let's, let's do it right here.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:04]

So you th- you think because in a classical military perfect scenario, you, you- your artillery's hitting all the way until you're-



**levgen Malik** [1:02:13]

Yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:13]

... but they had a big break between the artillery barrage ending-



**levgen Malik** [1:02:16]

Uh, look, they, uh, actually they, they, uh, used the hard alter- artillery all the night. But when they started to attack us, they used, uh, mortars-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:26]

Mortars, okay



**levgen Malik** [1:02:26]

... all the time.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:27]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:27]  
120 millimeters already.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:29]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:29]  
Uh, so-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:31]  
So they lifted their heavy artillery and switched to mortars.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:33]  
Yeah, heavy artillery got back.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:34]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:34]  
And they started to attack us with the T-72 tanks-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:39]  
Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:02:39]  
... and BMP-2-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:40]  
Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:02:40]

... and, uh, mortars, 120 millimeters, 82 millimeters. Basically, that is, uh, classic.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:47]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:48]

So that, that was the, yeah, classical, uh, frontline attack-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:53]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:02:53]

... by Russians.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:54]

But it took them six hours from when their ground assault started-



**levgen Malik** [1:02:57]

Yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:57]

... for their tanks to reach you.



**levgen Malik** [1:02:58]

Yes, six hours.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:02:59]

Got it.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:02:59]

Um-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:00]

So in that, in that time period, mortars were, were hitting or-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:03:03]

All the time.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:04]

Yeah. Okay.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:03:04]

Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:06]

Interesting. Um, so, uh, you're at the position. What happens next?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:03:13]

Uh, we, uh, we got the fight. Actually, my platoon got the fight.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:18]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:03:19]

But I wasn't there, [laughs] you know?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:20]

You, you-



**levgen Malik** [1:03:20]

I wasn't on the left side of our company with this, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:24]

Airborne



**levgen Malik** [1:03:24]

... uh, yeah, with, with these batteries. [laughs] And I was like, "What the hell?" And, uh, then we got, uh, command, uh, command to retreat approximately in 40 minutes-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:37]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:03:38]

... uh, after the fight. Uh, we lost five guys there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:43]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:03:44]

They got to the captivity-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:46]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:03:46]

... uh, injured, but we couldn't get them.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:50]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:03:50]

That was simply impossible. Uh, that was like first casualties of our, uh, battalion, whole battalion.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:03:58]

Or was it the platoon or from your platoon?



**levgen Malik** [1:04:00]

From my platoon, yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:01]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:04:02]

Because the main, uh, strike was, uh, to this platoon.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:06]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:04:07]

And one position was completely destroyed-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:09]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:04:10]

... like first five minutes. That was a position with the anti-tank rocket launcher.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:15]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:04:15]

The guy made the first shot-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:17]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:04:17]

... and he shot it the first tank, probably first tank in this war.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:20]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:04:21]

And but that was the only what he could do because, uh, after that, uh, Russians used such, such amount of, uh, military equipment, I, I haven't even seen in my life before that it, that can be used in such amount, you know?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:35]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:04:36]

Uh, they, they were, they destroyed that position completely, and they, that, uh, position, Platon called, Platon.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:44]

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:04:45]

Uh, they got this forest line.

## Chapter 14: Retreating to Better Positions



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:49]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:04:49]

And, uh, actually we got one pla- our platoon, our point, and other two points were by Russians-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:04:56]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:04:56]

... captured. And there was a distance between them, one and a f- 150 meters.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:01]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:05:02]

So Russians, they just stand, and they, they run, and that's it. Like in, uh, in one minute they were already there in, uh, our position, in our point.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:12]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:05:13]

And that, that was the end for them, actually.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:15]

Yeah. So at that point when the, when you lost that position, uh, Platon, then there was a call made for the, for the whole battalion to move back because-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:05:26]

Yes, because the plan was that was not, uh, I think our, uh, uh, our war chiefs, they understood the situation, and that, that line we hold, that was not the, uh, main, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:41]  
Line of defense



**levgen Malik** [1:05:42]  
... defense line. Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:43]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:05:43]  
We h- we got much more better positions behind us-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:47]  
Okay



**levgen Malik** [1:05:47]  
... behind the river. That was, uh, like 15 kilometers behind us-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:52]  
Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:05:52]  
... I think 15, 20 kilometers.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:05:54]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:05:55]  
More like 20. And we got dots there or special positions w- with the stones, with the iron-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:03]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:06:03]

... everything perfect. Uh, we were, we got there in w- we, we retreated two times.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:11]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:06:11]

First time we got behind the river-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:14]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:06:14]

... to stop them. Uh, we-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:16]

And so, so when you retreated to the river, behind the river, that was what? 15-kilometer movement under fire?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:06:22]

Uh, I think yes, something like that, 15 kilometers. Uh, but that was like, you know, pretty much crazy, uh, when battalion retreats, uh, that's like [laughs] you, you cannot shoot them correctly, you know?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:38]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:06:39]

Uh, for artillery, that is, uh, almost impossible, so we just ran. But I knew. I think Russians, they, um, they scared as well-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:49]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:06:50]

... pretty much. Because, you know, that this is so scary. You can sit here s- speak about it and smile, laugh, but-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:56]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:06:56]

... at that time nobody laughs, you know?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:06:58]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:06:59]

Uh, we, we were cr- crazy. We're scared, all of that, and Russia's scared as well.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:04]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:07:04]

And, uh, I remember when we were running, like whole company, uh, maybe four- 40, 50 guys, and I've seen the hill in the field.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:13]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:07:13]

And we were running. That was like one kilometer. And I thought, "My God, two tanks. You need just two tanks here, and you will destroy all this company-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:20]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:07:20]  
... and nobody will do anything." But they didn't come.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:24]  
Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:07:24]  
I don't know. Uh, so what were they doing? So we just retreated 15 kilometers approximately. We just run with all the equipment and, um-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:34]  
And how long did that, that take your, your company to move?



**levgen Malik** [1:07:39]  
I, I don't know-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:40]  
A day? A day and a half?



**levgen Malik** [1:07:41]  
Even how-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:41]  
Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:07:42]  
... no, we, we just [laughs] 40 minutes and we were there. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:46]

Okay, so it was in vehicles. Was it in vehicles? Okay.



**levgen Malik** [1:07:49]

No, that was-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:50]

15-



**levgen Malik** [1:07:50]

... by our legs, you know? We were running



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:52]

... 15 kilometers in 40 minutes?



**levgen Malik** [1:07:54]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:54]

Okay.



**levgen Malik** [1:07:54]

I don't... I think that w- Listen, if-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:57]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [1:07:57]

... when you got these things behind you, you run so fast-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:07:59]  
[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [1:07:59]  
... like as if you have T-Rex like [laughs] running for you.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:08:03]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:08:03]  
So you don't have a lot of chance. You don't have time to stand- ... and smoke some cigarettes. So yes, we just ran across the river- ... and got the new position. They were pretty much horrible positions. But the place was really good- ... because behind the river, and we got really huge hill there. Really high. And that was so perfect for us, for our anti-tank teams- ... to defend this position. And we got... One night we just stood. We were preparing the positions and we were reading the news. Some of us got that internet.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:08:53]  
So this is the first night after the invasion started.



**levgen Malik** [1:08:55]  
Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:08:55]  
You'd got back behind the river in your new defensive positions.



**levgen Malik** [1:08:59]  
Exactly. Without any stuff. I didn't have anything. [laughs] But-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:09:09]  
What about those Harris radio batteries? [laughs]



**levgen Malik** [1:09:11]

Forget about it. [laughs] I just threw them out and that's it- ... because I didn't- ... have even this Harris?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:09:18]

You just needed to get out.

## Chapter 15: Shedding the Heavy Gear



**levgen Malik** [1:09:20]

Yes. I just got my AK-74. And that's it. When we were running, I even threw out my plate carrier. Because that was too heavy. [laughs] In this war, actually all this story in Mariupol as well, I was without plate carriers. Because I discovered that easier legs will save you much better than the plate carrier. Because at that period of time, the least we got was 82 millimeters on our side. That was the least. But usually that was tanks, aircraft, half-ton bombs. What plate carrier- ... against these half-ton bombs? You will be cut by molecules- ... atoms like that. It doesn't make any sense. So I just threw it out. Then we got behind the river and we prepared for the next day.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:10:25]

Is this the river in Mariupol or-



**levgen Malik** [1:10:28]

Ka-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:10:29]

Or-



**levgen Malik** [1:10:29]

... Kamianske.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:10:30]

Okay, Kamianske. So it's to the east of Mariupol still.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:10:33]

Exactly. And I remember the time when... Because I lost my charger for my mobile phone. I've lost everything. All of us lost everything. I switched off my phone because I knew that if it's going to be dead, then I will not call my parents, and I won't know anything about them. And next morning after that, so that was 25th of February, I switched on my phone, and I saw a sound message from my mom. The first message was like I heard she was running with a bag. And I heard she was going down- ... the stairs, because her flat was on the second floor. And I heard that she was going down, and she said, "Okay, I will go to Germany as we planned, as you told me." And then I saw the second audio message from my mom. I started to listen to it, and I heard that she was running with this bag back upstairs, and she said, "No, I changed my mind. I will never escape from my country. Please kick their asses." [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:12:08]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:12:08]

That's it. And I was like, "God."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:12:11]

Wow.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:12:11]

[laughs] "Okay. We will try."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:12:13]

Wow.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:12:14]

Yes. That was something unbelievable, actually.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:12:16]

Nothing like your mom to motivate you, huh?



**levgen Malik** [1:12:18]

Yes. She said, "I will not run in my own country like a rat." ... "That is impossible. This is my country. We live here, and that's it." So we started to fight because that day, 25th of February, Russians tried to attack us, to assault us. And we got this anti-tank team. His nickname was Kyiv. Really old, these old mariners. All his life since he was 18, he became a mariner. So highly qualified man. He got a troop. His squad, anti-tank squad. And they were fighting with just this one anti-tank rocket launcher. They damaged two tanks and two BMPs- ... in this fight on their own. Because the rocket launcher was the only one that had enough range to fight the tanks, and they did it. They defended the whole position. We had 80 guys on that position. Russians again started to assault us with mortars, artillery, Grad, Hurricane, Uragan, this MLRS 220 millimeters. Then we got, I think on the 26th of February, we got a command to fall back another five kilometers, I think. We got there, and we got much better positions there. Actually, those were really good positions, maybe the best ones I got in my life. I didn't have to work there, actually. [laughs] So everything was prepared. Good position, but-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:14:15]

Where were those positions? Right outside of Mariupol or-



**levgen Malik** [1:14:18]

Outside. The village Orlovske.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:14:22]

Orlovske.

## Chapter 16: Facing the Flanking Threat



**levgen Malik** [1:14:23]

Yes. Then what happened, we discovered that Russians got through the Kherson region. They went from Crimea- ... assaulted our positions, and they got inside Ukraine. And we discovered that one division, a whole division, was getting to our back. And that was unbelievable because we held the line. We were fighting. Everything was great, and now we got this division behind- ... us. So what should we do? And we got this command. Actually, moreover, we discovered that Russians, when they tried to attack our battalions those first couple of days, they didn't manage. And after that, they started to attack the 53rd mechanized-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:15:21]

Mechanized



**Ievgen Malik** [1:15:21]

... mechanized brigade, which was on the northern part- ... of our flank. And they assaulted them. We actually had one division behind us and another regiment or brigade coming on the left flank. So that was really-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:15:47]

So they broke through the 53rd?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:15:49]

Yes. Yes. So they were getting behind us from two different sides. That was a truly dangerous situation. And we got a command from our battalion commander to get to Mariupol. And we got there at night. We were there on the 1st of March. We went at night, and I remember the time when we had to go there on the 28th of February. But when the commander of our company said it over the radio station, we started to move to our BTRs. We already had them because Minsk didn't work. [laughs] Yes. And we started to move to our BTRs, and exactly at that time, Russians started to cover us with their artillery like crazy. So we understood that they are listening to our Harris, actually. [laughs] Yes. So we got a command to move back to our positions. And at night, the company commander just sent marines to the platoon commanders to give the command that we had to move at night, maybe at 2:00 or 3:00 AM, without lights, without anything. We just got into our BTRs and moved to Mariupol.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:17:29]

And so you'd successfully defended from the 26th till the 28th of February. You'd held the line, but because you found out-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:17:39]

From the 24th to the 28th.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:17:41]

Well, yeah. From the 24th you fell back twice, but-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:17:45]

Yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:17:46]

... the really good positions you wanted to hold, you couldn't hold because from the north-



**levgen Malik** [1:17:50]

We could hold it forever, but we were there two days.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:17:54]

Yeah, you were getting surrounded from the north, and you had troops in the back, so.



**levgen Malik** [1:17:57]

Exactly. From the north and from the west side- ... actually.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:18:02]

So you had to... The brigade made the decision because the 53rd had lost- ... the line. Okay, we have to now fall back as a brigade into Mariupol and defend the city.



**levgen Malik** [1:18:18]

Yes. And when we got to Mariupol, we knew that the Azov Regiment was there already. And they were preparing to fight, to defend the city- ... as long as possible. That was the plan for this Azov Regiment from the very beginning, as I knew even... I didn't know anyone from this regiment, but I knew some instructor who prepared the inventor. And he said that yes, this is the plan, that Azov will fight in Mariupol. I knew that in the year 2021- ... actually.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:18:59]

So the marines were out on the line of contact.



**levgen Malik** [1:19:02]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:19:03]

Azov was back in the city preparing the defense of the city, and then when your line was broken, the marine brigade went back to join-



**levgen Malik** [1:19:14]

Yes



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:19:14]

... the defense of the city.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:19:15]

And that is our story, the story of our company and our position, because there are different stories from other guys. Russians tried to assault not just our position but other companies. We got casualties. There was a time when Russians tried to assault another village with another company of ours. They tried to do that. They assaulted the first village. On the second village, they got defeated, and they started to attack it by aircraft and MLRS artillery like crazy. And there were 35 guys in that village- ... our marines. And we got casualties, probably

## Chapter 17: Entering the Besieged City



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:20:04]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:20:05]

... by one artillery attack.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:20:06]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:20:06]

All got the concussions and, uh, other, uh, types of injuries. So that, that was really hard. And, uh, this, uh, uh, BMP, uh, th- this marine battalion of, uh, brigade without number, as I said. They, they were defending, uh, the line as well. They got, uh, they got assaulted by probably 10 battalion, 15 tanks, and, uh, 10 BMP2. Uh, actually we were watching because, you know, there were a lot of hills, uh, at that, um, direction. And we've seen, uh, all the lines, and we've seen, you know, this infantry battalion holds the line. And, uh, from the forest you got this, uh, fighting vehicles. They just make a line and started to shoot.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:20:55]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:20:56]

And, you know, like, 15 tanks and 10 BMP. That was crazy. And plus mine, uh, mortars-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:02]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:21:02]

... of course. You, nothing goes without mortars, you know? [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:07]

Yeah. Yeah. So you get back into Mariupol, and, um, what happens then at that point? What, what does the mission become, and, and where were you?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:21:17]

Uh, we got to the factory, Illichia.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:21]

Mm-hmm. So this is different factory than Azov.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:21:25]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:26]

So, yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:21:26]

Uh, Mariupol city is, uh... Look, there was approximately half a million citizens.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:33]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:21:34]

And that i- was huge industry city because w- w- we got the two big factories.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:43]  
Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:21:43]  
Enormously big.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:45]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:21:45]  
These two factories were probably together were maybe even bigger than the city.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:51]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:21:51]  
Can you imagine that?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:52]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:21:53]  
Half a million city, and we got two factories even bigger than the city.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:21:56]  
Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:21:56]  
And we got just one regiment and one brigade there. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:00]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:00]

And, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:01]

So Azovstal is the, is the one that Azov-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:04]

Of the, uh, south part. Uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:07]

And then you, you were in Illich, which was also-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:10]

North



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:10]

... yeah, north part.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:11]

Yes. North and, uh, south. So we got to Illichia on the north part. Uh, and, uh, we were waiting for the command. No one understood anything. And, uh, first what... Well, we got to this factory early morning, approximately 6:00 AM. Nobody slept.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:31]

March 1st.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:31]

Yes. That's like we forgot what does it mean to sleep. [laughs] And, uh, uh, we were w-waiting for the order to move on to Zaporizhzhia city.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:45]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:45]

Uh, but approximately at 15 PM, so-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:51]

3:00 PM, yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:52]

Yeah, in 3, 3:00 PM, means seven hours approximately-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:22:55]

Yeah



**Ievgen Malik** [1:22:55]

... after we got to the factory. We got a command, uh, that we got new positions.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:01]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:02]

We go there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:03]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:04]

Uh, so, um, the thing is that we had to m- to defend our positions, uh, as in circle.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:15]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:15]

Because we were surrounded, uh, till the day. We were already surrounded from the west, east, north part.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:22]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:22]

On the s- south, there, there was a sea.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:24]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:25]

We got Navy Seals, Navy Seal there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:28]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:29]

So we were completely surrounded already.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:31]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:31]

Uh, s- we got different, um, opinion about that situation. Someone says that we could escape-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:42]  
Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:42]  
... till 3rd March for sure.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:44]  
Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:46]  
Someone said that the ba- battalion of 17th, uh, tank brigade tried.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:52]  
Uh-huh.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:52]  
And they didn't manage.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:53]  
To, to break through-



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:55]  
Yeah



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:55]  
... from the north?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:23:56]  
Yes. Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:56]

Okay.



**levgen Malik** [1:23:57]

First days of March.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:23:58]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:24:00]

But, uh, I think-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:24:01]

Did you, did you know that tank brigade was trying to break through at that point, or you didn't know?



**levgen Malik** [1:24:05]

No, we didn't. But I kn- I knew. You know, we are, uh, we were not mobilized. We are contract.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:24:12]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:24:12]

So we're little bit more professional.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:24:15]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:24:16]

And we knew that, yeah, we got the, here one brigade, marine brigade, and, uh, s- uh, re- this National Guard regiment.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:24:25]

Azov.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:24:26]

Azov. Uh, and we knew that, yeah, the command is to stay, but we know why. We understand why. Because, uh, we are gathering, uh, such huge amount of troops. As I, as I know, that is ex- uh, approximately three divisions. So-

## Chapter 18: Holding the Strategic Line



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:24:43]

Yeah. So, so if, if they're fixated on Mariupol, they can't go to Zaporizhzhia, to Dnipro.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:24:48]

Exactly. Exactly. So that, that was, uh, strategically, that was pretty much correct, I think. So that's why no one argued.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:24:57]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:24:57]

We understood, like, yeah, we, we are done. But [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:01]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:25:01]

This, this is the war, isn't it? Yeah. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:05]

And this, this is for, uh, the, the greater good of-



**levgen Malik** [1:25:08]

Of course



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:08]

... of the country.



**levgen Malik** [1:25:09]

Exactly. Because we knew that, uh, there were, uh, hard, uh, battlefields, uh, on Kyiv direction, Chernihiv direction, Sumy direction-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:18]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:25:19]

... Kharkiv direction, Mykolaiv direction-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:21]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:25:21]

... Zaporizhzhia. And, uh, everyone is fighting. Uh, that is hard because guys don't have any lines in front-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:30]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:25:30]

... uh, d- defense lines. So th- that was on, uh, mobile war.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:35]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:25:36]

Like movement war.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:37]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:25:37]

And we, we got the positions. We, we have just to hold, to clinch our enemy.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:43]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:25:43]

Uh, so we, we did it. We, uh, we understood that mission, and, uh, we did our job, I think.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:25:50]

Mm-hmm. So you defended on the north side of Mariupol, or where was your position?



**levgen Malik** [1:25:55]

Yes. Uh, I got two different positions. Uh, till 17th... Well, till 16th of March, I was on, uh, uh, Neptune-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:08]

Mm



**levgen Malik** [1:26:08]

... position Neptune, and then I moved to Charlie. That was, uh, one of two the most north positions-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:16]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:26:17]

... the, the last positions, you know. Uh, basically we got, uh, one line-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:21]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:26:21]

... for our battalion, and that two positions were out of line.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:25]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:26:25]

Uh, and, uh, I was, uh, like, uh, the chief one of that positions.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:32]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:26:33]

Well, pretty, [laughs] pretty interesting time of life. Um, uh, that was Agrofirma.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:41]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:26:41]

Ag- Agrofirma. So, uh, Illichiv factory was big one, enormously big factory, and, uh, Agrofirma factory, uh, that was something much less, um, maybe three kilometers, uh, long-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:26:59]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:26:59]

... and, uh, two kilometers wide.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:01]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:01]

Something like that. But w- we got so, so many metal, uh, structures there. We got two nine, uh, uh, floors buildings there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:12]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:13]

And, uh, enormously, uh, so, so a lot, uh, these barracks-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:20]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:27:20]

... and et cetera. You know, that, that was factory.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:23]

Good, good fighting positions.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:25]

Old Soviet Union factory.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:26]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:26]

Like, like in the cinema, something-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:28]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:27:28]

... like that. So, uh, that was very good to defend that position against mechanized battalions companies, but so horrible to defend from raccoon, [laughs] you know?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:42]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:43]

So because y- you go there, and you could be sh- sh- shot, and no one would understand even from where-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:50]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:27:50]

... that was, that happened. Like, you know, uh, that, that positions, that factory, that was a dream for snipers.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:56]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:58]

Yeah.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:27:58]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:27:58]

Our snipers did a great job there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:00]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:28:00]

I don't even know what would happen if we won- we won't have them. There were three snipers from brigade number 35-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:07]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:28:07]

... marine brigade.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:08]

Now, so the, the 35th marine brigade was also in Mariupol too then?



**levgen Malik** [1:28:12]

Uh, no.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:13]

No.



**levgen Malik** [1:28:13]

Ju- just, just there is, uh, three sniper teams.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:17]

Okay.



**levgen Malik** [1:28:17]

And the, the whole brigade was, I think, Zaporizhzhia, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:21]

Okay



**levgen Malik** [1:28:21]

... direction or something.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:22]

So they were, they were outside of Mariupol.



**levgen Malik** [1:28:23]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:24]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:28:24]

Uh, actually, we got, um... Look, uh, marine troops got pretty a lot in Ukraine. We got two brigades, two separate battalions, infantry battalions-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:37]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:28:37]

... uh, artillery brigade, MLRS regiment-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:40]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:28:41]

... Hurricane 220 millimeters, uh, raccoon battalion-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:45]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:28:46]

... and, uh, logistic. So that- that's pretty a lot. That's pretty strong, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:28:52]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:28:52]

... well, troop. But we were e- e- anywhere. We didn't even know our brigade was in Mariupol. 36th, uh, Battalion 503 was in Luhansk, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:05]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:29:05]

... region. Uh, 137th Battalion was in Crimea direction.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:11]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:11]

Brigade number 35 on Zaporizhzhia direction. Artillery brigade, no one even didn't know where are they, [laughs] you know?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:17]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:17]

So w- we were, like, everywhere.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:20]

Yeah. So you had some snipers from the 35th Brigade helping you out.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:23]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:23]

And, and basically combination of snipers and really just good fighting positions. You were able to hold that for-



**levgen Malik** [1:29:31]

That's all



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:31]

... 15 days.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:32]

Yes.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:33]

Wow. Um, and how many people were defending that factory?



**levgen Malik** [1:29:37]

We got two positions. Well, till six- 16th of March, there were approximately 100 guys there.

## Chapter 19: Uniting the Diverse Forces



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:46]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:46]

But there, there were guys from brigade number 56.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:51]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:52]

Not a lot because, uh, they got a base in Mariupol.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:29:56]

Mm.



**levgen Malik** [1:29:56]

But the brigade was, uh, in, uh, Donetsk direction.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:00]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:00]

And they left some kind of something like battalion-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:03]

Yeah



**levgen Malik** [1:30:04]

... uh, with, uh, some people just to hold the base.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:07]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:07]

And when the war started, they just joined, joined to our brigade.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:11]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:11]

So we got, uh, there were guys from 56th Brigade, uh, Azov Regiment-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:17]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:30:17]

... and these, uh, three sniper teams.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:19]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:20]

But then, uh, on, uh, 16 March, the situation was horrible in the city because Russians started to assault the city on the f- 5th of March.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:30]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:31]

And they destroyed it completely.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:33]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:33]

And, um, uh, Azov guys got the, uh, command to move to Azovstal-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:39]

Mm-hmm



**levgen Malik** [1:30:40]

... I think, or to, to the city to fight in the city. Uh, and, uh, Azov-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:46]

So they were defending to the west of your position on the other side.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:50]

They were defending, like, everywhere.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:51]

Everywhere. Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:52]

[laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:30:52]

All over the city, yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:30:53]

Yes. Exactly. Uh, so, uh, actually Azov, they, they, they controlled that Agrofirma factory.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:00]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:31:00]

But after they get out from there, they just, uh, talk to, uh, our, uh, commander of our brigade that-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:08]

Right



**Ievgen Malik** [1:31:08]

... "Please hold this, uh, position."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:10]

Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:31:10]

And they, uh, made the decision that they have to send marinas there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:15]

Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:31:16]

And, uh, they did it. Uh, after that, we got on Agrofirma factory two positions. I'll tell you 53, 54 guys there-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:27]

Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:31:27]

... we got.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:28]

Yeah.



**levgen Malik** [1:31:28]

That's it.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:28]

So really just your company plus some other people, or it was a mix of people? It was-



**levgen Malik** [1:31:33]

That was mixed because in my position I got, uh, 30 guys, but among the 30 guys I- we got just eight marinas.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:40]

Yeah. So you had-



**levgen Malik** [1:31:42]

Yes. [laughs] And, uh-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:31:44]

Whoever was fighting



**levgen Malik** [1:31:44]

... also you have to understand, actually, this is the funny story. When in such situation, when you have to... You got the company, for example. I don't know, 50 guys, and you got the command, you have to send some part of your troops somewhere to do some job. You don't know what exactly. Who would be send [laughs] who, who will be send from your company to make this job by your commander?



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:11]

Mm-hmm.



**levgen Malik** [1:32:12]

Just the best guys, you know. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:14]  
Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:32:14]  
Just the best of the best.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:15]  
Yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:32:16]  
So, you know, uh, first of all, uh, and we, we knew what is, uh, what are this position because, uh, in thr- three, four days before, uh, Russians tried to assault that factory and they got casualties. Approximately half hundred soldiers were just killed, like more than 30 for sure.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:35]  
Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:32:35]  
Uh, these snipers and Azov, uh, guys, they made this job. They just-



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:40]  
Mm-hmm



**Ievgen Malik** [1:32:41]  
... killed a lot of soldiers there.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:43]  
Mm-hmm.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:32:43]  
And then, uh, our commander, he said like he gathered all the sergeants and said, "Well, we got the command to move to this, uh, position. So I just ask you who, who is ready."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:32:55]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:32:56]  
And I was like, "Okay. Whatever."



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:33:00]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:33:00]  
"Let's do this." And then he said, "Well, okay, you're a nice guy. That's why I will let you choose for your position seven other marines, but to the other position I will send." And I said, "Well, okay, that's enough for me because now I know that I can get cool, strong guys—" ... for my position," but I knew that another position is [laughs] crazy.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:33:27]  
Is not going to—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:33:28]  
Yes. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:33:29]  
Not going to have the best people.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:33:31]  
Exactly. [laughs] True special forces. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:33:35]  
So you took over that position from Azov, which had already— ... inflicted a lot of casualties. And then on the 16th of March, why did you leave that position? Is that because they were—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:33:47]

No, exactly from the 16th of March I was on Agla Fabra. Agla Factory till the very end. Till the 14th of April.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:33:55]

Really? Okay. So you—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:33:56]

One month



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:33:57]

... before the 16th of March, where were you?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:33:59]

Before the 16th of March I was on Ilichiv factory.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:34:03]

Ilichiv. Okay. So that's the main—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:34:05]

With my own company.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:34:06]

Yes, with your own company. So you went and held that strong point for almost a month then? Wow. And how many times did the Russians assault that position?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:34:20]

Well, they didn't—after that time with the Azov, they didn't try to assault as usual, but we got plenty of this TRG group. I don't know how it is in... It's like recon groups—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:34:39]

Reconnaissance.

## Chapter 20: Defending the Factory Gates



**Ievgen Malik** [1:34:40]

... yes, which tries to get inside and just to—they do not even try to assault, they just try to kill you, to destroy some infrastructure— ... and et cetera. So we got a lot of night fights there— ... with these guys. But that was so crazy, how they did it because we understood that they are totally crazy idiots— ... actually because what they did, just try to imagine. They took one guy, for example, a mobilized guy from Donetsk, some civil guy. They said, "Now you are a special forces man. You are Rambo. You are the best one. Here's the light for you." Lighter.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:35:31]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:35:31]

Civil lighter. [laughs] And they said, "Go there. You see this factory, Agla Factory? There is no one there, and you just go and find some place for us to come and take a rest. Okay? Good. Good." And this guy goes during the night, and he just goes with the lighter and [laughs] just watching what is going on on this factory. We see this idiot. We start to, we try to capture him. He can understand that his commander lied, and someone is here. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:36:06]

So you captured some of these guys then?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:36:08]

No, we tried. But we tried because he is not empty, of course. He got some— ... weapon also. So the fight starts, and then we start to shoot him, try to shoot him to destroy him. And at that period of time, we can discover that we got plenty of snipers— ... and truly special forces recon around this idiot. And they just use him.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:36:36]

Oh, so he was drawing you guys out.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:36:38]

Yes. We start to shoot. They can see the light, and they start to shoot us, [laughs]. And then you got this crazy fight at night. You don't see anything because that was the year 2022. We didn't have anything. We didn't have archers.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:36:53]

Didn't have night vision.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:36:53]

Yes, we didn't have any night vision. You just have this AK-74. That's it. And you got plenty of iron structures— ... buildings. And that was pretty much crazy. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:37:09]

So every night it was probing attacks or some—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:37:12]

I would say not every attack. A lot, but for sure not every attack. Because, again, what we have to understand, that was the very first month of war, and Russians truly believed that it was going to be two, three weeks maximum. In that case, if they got some... Well, they didn't... They used everything they could. So you just send two mines from mortars to Russians— ... and back you got something unbelievable. Iskander, [laughs] aircraft, and Russians—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:37:51]

They were shooting everything.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:37:52]

Yes. You got a tank battalion attacking you. Because they truly believed that we didn't have any army, we would not— ... try to defeat. So everything would be pretty easy. That's why they used all the troops, all the equipment, all the ammunition they had. That's why the biggest problem we had was tanks, artillery, and aircraft.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:38:18]

So you held that position for a month— ... until April 14th. And then what happened?



**Ievgen Malik** [1:38:27]

Something happened on April 9th— ... actually. [laughs] Look, at the end of March, the Russians captured the city approximately on March 20th. 23rd, 24th of March— ... something like that. And we understood that the end is coming. It was so close because we were running out of food already. We ran out of cigarettes, and that is—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:39:03]  
[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:39:03]  
... a crisis. We don't—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:39:04]  
A catastrophe.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:39:05]  
... we cannot even... Yes, this is even worse than not having anti-aircraft systems, which was okay. But when we ran out of cigarettes— ... that was truly a catastrophe. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:39:18]  
And there was no resupply.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:39:19]  
No. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:39:20]  
No resupply.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:39:22]  
So we understood that we had to do something because we could not continue just sitting on the positions because they were bombing. For them, that was so easy. They just had to discover our position.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:39:40]  
And then use the air force.

## Chapter 21: Enduring the Constant Bombardment



**levgen Malik** [1:39:41]

Yes, and use air forces because the best we had were Stingers— ... and Igla, which is like a civilian Stinger. And then we had, just try to imagine, to protect the whole city, we had as anti-aircraft systems three Strela-10. That is something like Chaparral— ... 3. And we had just three Shilka. ZU-23-4. That is something like the M163 Vulcano. You know this? Three. So three Vulcano and three Chaparral. That's it. And the Russians used, as I know, not approximately, they used three aircraft regiments. One from Crimea, a second one from Novorossiysk, and the third one from Taganrog. So that was like an aircraft division. They were bombing the city daily. I remember the situation, for the first six days we still had internet. And my friend read the news, and he started to laugh. I said, "What? What happened?" And he said, "Listen, news from Kharkiv. The situation in Kharkiv is a catastrophe. Russians bombed the city 10 times during the day." And we started to laugh because Russians bombed Mariupol 10 times during—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:41:18]

... one hour.



**levgen Malik** [1:41:19]

... when my friend read this statement—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:41:21]

[laughs]



**levgen Malik** [1:41:21]

So, you live in Kyiv. You know what is going on here every night. Can you imagine that in Mariupol, that was each 30 minutes? Each 30 minutes during one and a half months.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:41:35]

And they didn't have any air defense.



**levgen Malik** [1:41:38]

No.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:41:38]

So you guys ran out of... And I know that in your interview with Rob, you go into the breakout attempt and getting into captivity. So I'm going to end it here because we have to wrap up. But April 9th kind of set the scene for the next episode where you and Rob start about how the battle for you started to end, and the period of breaking out and

Samuel P.N. Cook (continued)  
going into captivity.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:42:06]

For me, that was maximum funny because when you run out of a way out— ... you start to do crazy things. That is normal for people. When you don't see the way out, you start to do some stupid things.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:42:32]

Gets desperate.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:42:33]

Exactly. And that's all the story about the desperate.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:42:37]

But when you—and this is where you pick it up with Rob, right? Okay. So you fought until April 14th at your position, and you were in that position when you saw a huge breakout attempt, which you go into in detail with Rob, and then that was the beginning of the end for your brigade, leading to you going into captivity. So the next two episodes with Rob, who's a senior researcher and does some podcasts from time to time with us at Borderlines Foundation, he goes into detail with you about the breakout attempt, the end of the Battle of Mariupol, and going into captivity. So Yevgeny, I'd like to thank you for sharing your story. It's been hugely educational for me. I hope I was able to help you clarify some points and tell the story to everyone. But I really appreciate your... I think a lot of people forget when they are watching the war, or even senior officers who might have been involved in this war from command posts, what it's like to be on the ground, and you really experienced that in one of the toughest battles of the war. And—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:43:59]

At that time, for sure, as I know, Mariupol was the hottest point on the planet— ... at that time.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:44:07]

And just to think about the significance of what you guys did, and all of those in your unit who knew that they were either going to get killed or go into captivity, which you're not sure which is worse, and after being in captivity—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:44:23]

Yes, exactly. [laughs]

## Chapter 22: Saving the Entire Country



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:44:24]

... sometimes you wonder which one would have been better. But the fact that for one and a half months, you and your brigade fought and tied down basically an entire army, preventing them from going across the Dnipro River, preventing them from going to Zaporizhzhia, to Dnipro city, behind the entire front line on the Donbas. I truly think that the Battle of Mariupol was a turning point in terms of the survival of the country. If you guys had not accepted those orders and fought for a month and a half against the Russians, I think the entire war could have been lost, honestly. So from just a cursory [laughs] amateur, not fully researched military historical perspective on my side, and I think a lot of analysts would agree, what you guys decided to do for a month and a half knowing that the best you could ever expect was a short, quick death— ... or a— ... painful captivity.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:45:36]

We tried not to think about it. We tried not to speak about it. Everyone understood this is the thing, this is the difference between a contract soldier and this kind of—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:45:53]

Mobilized



**Ievgen Malik** [1:45:54]

... mobilized.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:45:55]

Contract.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:45:55]

Well, no, actually mobilized guys, they were fighting as well. But the heart of a crew has to be professional specialized contracts, and it doesn't even mean that you know how to fight, but it means you know what the order means. That you have to carry out the order, and if the heart of combat brigade officers and sergeants understand this, they are really highly qualified and disciplined. In that case, you can use mobilized guys with them, and they will manage to... They will carry out the order. So we got this order. We understood that we were done.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:46:43]

[laughs]



**Ievgen Malik** [1:46:43]

From the very beginning when we were going to this Neptun on March 1st, because we were waiting for them to tell us, "Go to Zaporizhzhia." After we got this order to take the position and to defend, we understood everything. But you cannot find any mariner who would even try to escape. Everyone got to the position and started to carry out orders, and we knew what was going to be the finish of it, the end. But we truly believe that we broke all plans, and we could feel that in captivity. That they hate us. Guys from Mariupol, Azov, and mariners, that is the worst that can happen to you. ... from the very beginning they were so aggressive toward us because of that. Because they had to move further to Dnipro, and they got stuck in Mariupol.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:47:44]

Yeah, I mean, you really changed the course of the war with your leadership, your brigade, and the Azov Regiment. The story of the Battle of Mariupol is a case study in courage and following orders when you know that the best outcome for you is one of captivity or death, and being in captivity, as you said sometimes. In the next episode you probably wish it would have gone the other way, but—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:48:18]

Exactly. [laughs]



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:48:19]

But I'm really thankful you're sitting here. It's a privilege to have you as part of our team at the Borderlines Foundation, directing our team and helping me find, recruit, and manage a team of veterans to go tell your story in America, in London, across the world, and raise awareness about military history. Not just this war, but all the way back—the Zaporizhzhian tradition— ... the Hetmans, the Poltava, the ancient Kievan, rich—



**Ievgen Malik** [1:48:51]

We have a lot to tell to this world. Because actually, everyone I know in Europe, especially a lot of even military professional generals, they wondered how we managed to stand, to defeat all troops. But indeed, the Ukrainian nation has a really long military history. Just think about how all world wars were in Ukraine. All Napoleonic wars were in Ukraine. Each war, like the Mongols came to the west—



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:49:30]

Kyiv, yeah.



**Ievgen Malik** [1:49:31]

... through this territory. Attila came to the west through this territory. This is the territory of war.



**Samuel P.N. Cook** [1:49:39]

Yeah, the people here have it in their blood and genes and— ... and culture, I think the greatest warrior ethos and military history that the world deserves to know about outside of the lens of Empire and Soviet historiography, which I think is completely wrong compared to what the real truth is. So I look forward to many more episodes where you're gonna host our soldiers on this podcast. Let them tell their story in their native language and translate that to the world. Stories with you and Rob, which are in the next episodes, about your time in captivity, which is a really powerful story and I think shows the world exactly what the world is like, and what the consequences would mean if they're able to enslave a whole country, not just the people they've taken into captivity and the part of the country they occupy. So thank you again, Yevgeni. It was a privilege talking to you and sharing this story with the world on the Ukraine Military History Podcast. Thank you. Thank you much. I hope you enjoyed this episode with Yevgeni Malek where he details his story leading up to going into captivity, which we're gonna continue with Rob Lee, like I said at the beginning of the episode, in the next two episodes. This episode is on YouTube. If you listen to this on the podcasting app, you can also go watch it again on YouTube. If you're on YouTube right now, you can also remember to download our podcast app so you're always notified about new episodes that you can listen to on your phone. As always, you can go back to our website, download a PDF transcript of this. We have complete show notes where you can look at all the resources and links that we mentioned in the podcast. So finally, if you enjoyed this, please like and share and comment on this on all of your favorite social media platforms. Leave a review. It really helps other people find our show. So thank you for listening to this episode of the Ukraine Military History Podcast. I promised you at the beginning that I'd tell you more about our sponsors, if you'd like to find a way to support the Ukraine Military History Podcast, the Borderlands Foundation more broadly, or if you'd like to work with myself and the contributors, the editors, and the guests that come on this show. So this podcast is produced by the Borderlands Foundation. The Borderlands Foundation has two main initiatives. Our mission at the Borderlands Foundation, which was founded right after the war started in 2022, is to make sure that Ukraine's heroes are never forgotten. And there's two things that I'm passionate about helping Ukraine do. Number one is build a strong future for Ukraine, for my family that I'm raising here in Ukraine, through national military history study and education. I believe that nations, great nations, are founded and sustained and grow in strength based on the stories that those nations believe together about their history. And Ukraine has had a very complicated history. It's a very old country. A lot of people don't understand that Ukraine's 500 years older than actually Russia, as Ukraine was around before Russia. Ukraine was founded by Vikings that moved to this part of the world in the eighth and ninth century and were traders and became rulers of the local Slavic people. So Ukraine, Kyivan Rus, was an ancient and the most powerful empire in Europe. And Ukraine's history is very controversial. Through the years, Russia has appropriated it, stolen it, called it their own, and then tried to change history to make it their own, this great rich heritage that Ukraine has. So our mission at the Ukraine Military History Institute is to go back through history and reclaim Ukraine's great military history tradition. Because Ukraine's military history tradition encompasses almost all the great military traditions in the world. It started out interfacing and competing with the Vikings as well as Constantinople, and absorbed those traditions over the years. It became part of the military history tradition of the great Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and then the Ottoman-Mongol, kind of Crimean Tatar heritage of Genghis Khan's great military tradition. All fused, competed, and created this unique military history tradition inside Ukraine, which I call the Cossack military history tradition, which takes from Western military history, the German, American Mission Command, NATO Mission Command School, as well as the good things, hopefully, and leaves the bad from the school, deep battle, and a lot of the positive things that have come out of the military history tradition. And our mission is to help with the world's best military history center studying the current war, going all the way back into history throughout Ukraine's history, starting

Samuel P.N. Cook (continued)

battles from World War II that were fought in Ukraine, World War I, the first independence period from 1917 through the Civil War in 1921, back to the Cossack period, all the way back. Ukraine has a great and unique style of fighting and tradition of fighting. The first written constitution was written by a Cossack class. The warrior class wrote down the first declaration of rights in history, in modern history, which founded the Enlightenment, led to the American declaration of Bill of Rights, the Polish Constitution, and a number of other declarations of rights and constitutions since then, which were all inspired first by Ukraine's declaration of the rights with Pap Orlok after the defeat at Poltava at the hands of Peter the Great. So understanding Ukraine's military history tradition is a passion of ours. And every author who comes on this episode who publishes a written work, we're actually paying those authors. So if you wanna donate to support the authors, you can donate to get access to anything that's been published in the Ukraine Military History membership site, which we're gonna be releasing soon, where people who write about the current war or things from the past in military history, or some military historical case study that can help Ukraine think about how to fight and win and innovate in the current war, all those authors are getting paid by the center. I wanna encourage great scholarship by paying Ukrainians to write their own history, and other people who wanna contribute, to pay them to build this body of work and knowledge at the Ukraine Military History Institute. So when you donate to support this podcast, we have production costs. It helps us pay the author that we have on and interview about what they've written or what they've done. And then also just pays for all the production costs, the social media, the distribution, and everything that you enjoy about this podcast. So that's the first way you can support the center. The second big way you can support the center is we have and are building a Heroes of Ukraine tour, which is going to be a custom program that we're developing, which takes people who want to come in and see the battlefields of Ukraine from the current war that have been liberated. We can take you to different battlefield sites. The Battle of Kiev, which we've studied very well and have a lot of material, people who've studied that and can show that to you. Or if you want to go out to other sites, battles in territory that's been liberated in Kherson or Zaporizhia or other places out in Sumy or Kharkiv province, we can take you around to those sites. This is something we're developing. We want to launch this if and when the full-scale fighting with Russia pauses. We believe this could be a much bigger tour that people can come on a tour just by buying individual seats and over a couple of weeks meet people from all over the world who want to see Ukraine. But before we do that public version of the tour where anyone can book any number of seats at scheduled times, if any of you would like to have a tour of the battlefields of Ukraine that have already been liberated and are safe—we don't do war tourism to active parts of the fighting, but we do tours, historical staff ride battlefield tours for military professionals, government officials, and/or business leaders that would like to understand what has happened here. You can contact us about the Heroes of Ukraine tour. So that's the Ukraine Military History Institute, which pays for and produces this podcast. The next sponsor I'd like to discuss is the Ukraine Center for Traumatic Stress. This is a center that is near and dear to my heart because of my past service in combat as a soldier, my study of history and the history of psychological trauma that comes from serving in combat, and my own personal experience overcoming my struggles with it. It is a center dedicated to helping advance the research, conversation, and funding of breakthrough technologies and treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder, which affects a number of soldiers who've served in Ukraine. And we want to make sure that they recover psychologically to become productive, vibrant leaders in the future of Ukraine. This is headed by Major General Vladislav Kluchkov, retired, the former commander, the first commander of the Moral Psychological Support Forces of Ukraine under the Commander-in-Chief President Valeriy Zelenskyy. It was a new position that he created right before the full-scale invasion. And General Kluchkov has written his PhD on the military psychology of a soldier and is passionate about advancing the study and the treatment of this disorder for veterans. This is a podcast that we're going to be releasing very soon, translated for those who want to listen in on the conversation and comment

Samuel P.N. Cook (continued)

on it on our social media. But the interviews will be conducted to advance and start the conversation for veterans, mental health professionals, and government officials who are working on this problem, which we believe is critical to solve for the future of Ukraine. So if you'd like to donate to support that podcast, to help us produce and start that conversation, or if you'd like to inquire about donating to support specific veterans going through different treatments, workshops for treatment of PTSD, you're welcome to reach out to us. The center also has a rehabilitation through golf program where we pay for veterans to play golf and go play in our annual Heroes of Ukraine Freedom Summit golf tournament, which will be held next year in Dallas in the United States in March. And this is a very important program that you can also take a look at sponsoring veterans in their journey to mental health recovery. So that's the Ukraine Center for Traumatic Stress. And then finally, for those of you who watch this podcast and see our co-hosts and some of the guests that come on, all of our podcasts are filmed in Ukraine. The reason we do this is I believe in talking to Ukrainians and people who will actually come to Ukraine that want to speak about military history, analysis of the current war, defense industry issues—all the things that we need to learn in Ukraine and our allies in NATO who've supported Ukraine to fight and win the next war against our adversaries. Russia, China, Iran—all of the people that support Vladimir Putin are learning from this war the lessons that Russia's learning. We need to make sure that we learn the lessons from the war that Ukrainians are learning better and implement those across the force for our partner forces: Americans, British, all the other European NATO forces, partners out east, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and all the countries that are supporting Ukraine. We want to make sure that we create a community that disseminates those lessons. And we get contacted by different groups, sometimes governments or foreign militaries, that would like advisory services to help them learn and implement the lessons of this war for their armed forces. Defense companies reach out and would like to get help developing, testing, and selling their product inside Ukraine that may be helpful on the battlefield. That's what the Borderlands Group does. We advise defense tech companies. We even do forward support engineering for defense tech companies, software development, hardware, and hiring and staffing a forward-deployed engineering shop for Western defense companies. So for all those services—if you're looking for advisory services, custom analytical studies by Rob Lee and his team, or defense advisory services for defense companies or foreign militaries—we can put together a package for you, give you a proposal, and help you with that. So to get in touch with us, just go to the website at [theborderlandsgroup.com](https://theborderlandsgroup.com) and fill out our contact us form. We'll evaluate your request and get back to you in the appropriate secure communication channel if that's what you'd like to do. So thank you for watching the sponsor reads here. It's important to me that we provide value to you in every podcast episode, and these are the ways that you can support us so we can continue to afford to produce, expand, and increase the frequency of our content production for the benefit of Ukraine and its allies fighting this war, winning this war and the next.