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# UKRAINE'S War Trains

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Produced by Particules Docs & France Télévisions

60'

# NOTE OF INTENT

Our film is a journey.

Behind the windows of the trains traveling across Ukraine, war is everywhere. War follows every passenger on these trains.

We want to get on these trains with a camera, and show Ukraine at war, on its way to Europe, moving away from the Russian world.

We want to shoot these travel moments, these rare instants of human fragility: farewells, reunions, each captured outside of time during long hours spent on the train, day and night.

Women alone with their children, grandparents accompanying their grandchildren abroad.

The many single women who come and go abroad, to take a breather, study or work.

The men who join the front lines: these trains head east, and no one envies them but everyone admires them.

We would like to take several railway lines in and out of Ukraine, each of which will allow us to meet different people, and therefore to tell different stories. Trains will connect Poland, Hungary, Romania and Moldavia (and its constant fear of being Putin's next target), as well as the three Baltic states, which play a key role in Ukraine's aid and support system (many intellectuals, activists and artists regularly travel to the Baltic states).

Railway stations and waiting rooms are also important places within the country. Kyiv and Lviv railway stations are places both steeped in the history of the region and symbols of present-day resistance.

The lines running to and from the front lines or newly-liberated cities can tell the story of the war that is being waged, the fear, the disappointment, the victories and defeats.

# THE CONTEXT

Ukraine is a land of trains.

Like all the countries of the former Soviet empire, Ukraine has developed an immense, powerful and relatively fast railway network. Trains carry passengers, goods and the country's wealth, including coal. Today, it is one of the most important symbols of a Ukraine at war, definitively turning its back on the Russian world to join Europe.

The film we want to shoot will take place entirely in the country's trains and stations, meeting Ukrainians leaving and those returning, as well as those who simply move around and tell the story of the anxiety of a nation that has entered into resistance against one of the world's most powerful armies, as it passes through birch-tree landscapes, villages and gloomy suburbs.

A few figures to give you an idea of what is Ukrzaliznytsia (UZ):

27,000 km of lines, 10,000 of which are electric, 400,000 railway workers, the world's 14th-largest railway network and 6th-largest passenger network.





Of course, this network was highly dependent on Russia, as it was developed during the USSR. At the time, Kyiv was one of the most important railway stations in the Soviet empire, providing connections to Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Ever since independence, and especially since 2014 and the Russian invasion of Crimea, Kyiv has been looking to the USA and Europe to modernize and connect with Europe more effectively. The last agreement signed by Ukraine, 10 days after the invasion, was with Alstom for the supply of new locomotives.

Ukraine, like the rest of the former USSR, has a track gauge of 1520 mm, while the rest of the world has 1435 mm. Even today, this means endless wheel changes at the border. It will take decades for Ukraine to change all the rails, but the authorities in Kyiv are committed to it: it's a symbol that needs to be brought down, and Ukraine needs to take the EU train before it leaves the station.

Since the start of the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, the Ukrainian authorities have relied on trains. Railway workers taking part in the resistance, immediately shut down the lines that were supplying Russian troops while Kyiv was under siege. At the same time, 4 million Ukrainians calmly took secondary railway lines so they could reach the main stations and flee the country. In Lviv, the 5 platforms and 10 tracks saw dozens of trains leaving for Poland, packed with women and children, when the men called up to fight had to return to their units. No major incidents were recorded. Except, on April 8, when the Russian bombardment of the Kramatorsk station, the crossroads for soldiers leaving for the front, claimed the lives of 52 people.



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