

**International School of Estonia  
Memoirs of a Soldier Project**

**Script: Soldier Memoirs**

**Introduction**

**Raimonda:** (Read) This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it.

**Sadness**

**Raimonda:** Sadness (Read from the book) “We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer, we believe in the war.”

**Claire:** *“It was Christmas eve. I thought that I could go to the Head Quarters, but everyone had their families there. I thought I’ll go there and see all my colleagues with their wives and children. But it was going to be tough on me since I didn’t have my family around. So what I did, since we were allowed 3 Whisky bottles a month, I decided to just drink some of it and get a little dizzy and fall asleep. But when I started drinking the Whisky I just exploded in tears. As tears streamed down my face I would ask myself, “Why are you crying?!” And say to myself, “You are fine. You’re here drinking Whisky!” So the more whisky I drank the more I cried, because I remembered my wife and children. After that I just collapsed on my bed. It was a horrible night.” (Manuel Mestre Zacarias: Portuguese Colonial Wars)*

**Regina:** *All the men that were killed, it was all unnecessarily – for what? After the war was over we picked up a bunch of enemy sailors. We brought officers and men to our ship as prisoners. We met these young German sailors. Now we no longer enemies – they were no different than we were – young men all of us were 18 – 25 years old. (Cal Interview)*

**Greta:** *The worst for me was to leave my children, my affection for them was enormous. So leaving my children who were growing, leaving my wife whom I loved so much was very hard. You will understand one day. (Manuel Mestre Zacarias Portuguese Colonial Wars)*

**Friendship**

**Raimionda:** Friendship (Read) “Do I walk? Have I feet still? I raise my eyes, I let my friends move round, and turn myself with them, one circle, one circle, and I stand in the midst. All is as usual. My last friend has died. Then I know nothing more”

**Elise:** *“When I first got Vietnam there was a potential attack and that was the first time I met my friend Rodney. I dove for a low spot and he dove at the same time. He ended up on top of my legs.*

*He said, ‘Jim get your head down!’*

*I said, ‘I cant you’re on my legs and they’re bent the wrong way.’*

*He said, 'Oh sorry.'” (Jim Michel: Vietnam War)*

**Jo:** *“For a year and a half I didn’t see any people from the Baltics. I actually had the best relationships with some Russians from St. Petersburg. They were also has studied at the university. They were not at the same level but we had something in common.” (Veiko Tomson: Soviet Army)*

**Joao:** *“My comrades from the Destroyer Escort we are still friends. We have had ship reunions for the last 50 years. Previous to these reunions we did not get together much. A group of guys started reunions so we’ve had, I guess, 15 years of reunions. This last year when they got together for a reunion, there was only 6 to 8 people there. Many of the former World War Two comrades were too sick or too old to make the trips.” (Cal Sustachek: WWII)*

**Tinehsa:** *“You have to be close to the soldiers in your unit. Your life depends it. They are some of my best friends. We are all still in the same unit. (Jesse Chapman: War in Iraq)*

## Fear

**Raimonda:** Fear (Read) *“To me the front is a mysterious whirlpool. Though I am in still water far away from its center, I feel the whirl of the vortex sucking me slowly, irresistibly, inescapably into itself.”*

**Jo:** *You don’t have time to think. You react. All you do is get down low and shoot and try to keep your head down. I never saw who they were. I never saw them. You’d just shoot into an area. I never knew if I actually got them or not, but we could hear them sometimes. (Jim Michel Interview)*

**Greta:** *It was a difficult and terrifying period. I was constantly afraid they would take me to Siberia. (Oie Vobli Wife of Estonian Forest Brother)*

**Regina:** *The mortar rounds come in whistling and it gets louder and then explodes, not fire but sparks. They pack the bombs with anything nails, screws, colts and pieces of metal. The bomb canister flies everywhere and the other things too. (Jesse Hughes Interview)*

**Elise:** *In the hospital you walked around all day long in blue pajamas. Then later on they put us on guard duty, but they didn’t give us a rifle. We had a radio and these night goggles so you could see at night. I thought to myself, I don t have a rifle; I m going to be killed in my pajamas! (Jim Michel: Vietnam War)*

## Day-to-day Life

**Raimonda:** Day to Day Life (Read) *The soldier is on friendlier terms than other men with his stomachs and intestines. Three-quarters of his vocabulary is derived from these regions, and they give an intimate flavor to expressions of his greatest joy as well as of his deepest indignation.*

**Claire:** *Some days you had a special menu. Sundays you would get a boiled egg. The boiled egg was something special and the porridge on Sundays would be made from rice. It was a very special menu. (Veiko Tomson: Soviet Army)*

**Tinesha:** *The average day you woke up way too early. Ate some gross food. You went on a long mission. Came back really late and then went to bed - way too late . (Jesse Chapman: War in Iraq)*

**Jo:** *When you went on ambush you would go out just before dark and you came back when it was early in the morning and then you did the same thing over and over again. There was no Sunday, Monday or Tuesday. It was all Monday, so you just did the same thing over and over. (Jim Michel Interview)*

**Regina:** *I spent more than two months in the hospital. I have allergies and in summer time I have hay fever. In Soviet times allergies weren't treated as a disease, but with my symptoms they took me to the hospital. Since at university I had studied engineering, they had me build a fence around the hospital so I was a very important guy in the hospital. I was like a boss on the building site. Because they needed me, they always found another disease for me to have. (Veiko Tomson Soviet Army)*

## Combat

**Raimonda:** We lie under the network of arching shells and live in a suspense of uncertainty. If a shot comes, we can duck, that is all; we neither know nor can determine where it will fall

**Tinehsa:** *"The shooting started again and grenades went going off. They had grenade launchers in the trees above us. That's how I got hit the second time. The grenades were going off in the trees above us and I was hit in my right leg. I found out a couple days later that something hit me in my back. My back started itching and I found out that I pieces of metal in my backer."* (Jim Michel: Vietnam War).

**Elise:** *One thing that I found interesting was learning how to march. It may sound kind of silly, but if you can get a bunch of men to march together they will generally think together. That's how you keep discipline. It takes 4 to 5 months to get soldiers molded together so they can move together. If they move together they will also think together."* (Leo Mahan: WW II)

**Greta:** *"You would kill the soldier in front of you, looking in his eyes. You killed his with a sword or with a bayonet. Kill or be killed – it was psychologically atrocious."* (Manuel Mestre Zacarias – Portuguese Colonial War)

**Joao:** *"You would hear mortar rounds over your head. They would hit the ground almost right next to you. And then you realize, I could have just died."* (Jesse Hughes Interview)

## Returning Home:

**Raimonda:** "I imagined leave would be different from this. Indeed, it was different a year ago. It is I of course that have changed in the interval. There lies a gulf between that time and today."

**Claire:** *"For some reason I had a HUGE chocolate craving my last couple of weeks in Iraq and it still hasn't gone away."* (Jesse Chapman War in Iraq)

**Joao:** *“One man came home and his family didn’t recognize him. I mean in his head. He s physically fine but he watches every door.” (Leo Mahan: WWII)*

**Greta:** *When I came back from Lebanon, we were loaded in the plane. We took off all military equipment and we got a box with exactly the same clothes as we wore six or seven months before, when we left to fight. And then there’s the door - bye bye. It was like landing on Mars because I was sitting on the bus looking at Sweden pass by, yet so much had happened. I was surprised that it was all the same. Nothing had changed but I had. (Stefan Pettersson: UN Peace Keeping)*

## **Conclusion:**

**Raimonda:** (Read) He fell in October 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front, that the army report confined itself to the single sentence: All quiet on the Western Front. He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come.