

One of the tragic consequences of the Second World War was the extra-judicial forced eviction in 1944-1951 of about 700,000 Ukrainians from their ancestral lands, - namely, Lemkivshchyna, Nadsyannya, Pidlyashshya, Kholmshchyna, - and from the territories of the former Drohobych and Lviv oblasts (regions) which retreated to the Polish Republic. Mass evictions of Ukrainians from the ethnic Ukrainian lands were conducted in three stages.

**S** the first stage. The eviction was being carried out throughout 1944-1946 on the basis of the September 9, 1944 Agreement between the Government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Polish National Liberation Committee “On the evacuation of the Ukrainian population from the territory of Poland and Polish citizens from the territory of the Ukrainian SSR”.

**N** Despite the fact that the Agreement in question assumed the principle of voluntariness, in fact, the process of evicting Ukrainians from the ethnic Ukrainian lands of Lemkivshchyna, Nadsyannya, Pidlyashshya and Kholmshchyna, according to numerous testimonies of migrants and scientific research of Ukrainian scholars, was not only deprived of signs of declared voluntariness, but also occurred with the use of coercive methods, was accompanied by political repressions, anti-Ukrainian hysteria, massive terror against the indigenous Ukrainian population by the Polish chauvinistic gangs, burning Ukrainian villages to the ground, cruel executions of thousands of their innocent inhabitants. That was a brutal way of expelling Ukrainians based on their ethnic background. Leaving their fatherland or refusing to leave became a life-or-death matter for entire families. After the so-called voluntary resettlement, 482,800 Ukrainians ended up outside their native land. And about 150,000 of others who stayed were deported in 1947 in the framework of the jointly coordinated Polish-Soviet anti-Ukrainian military operation “Wisla”. They were entirely relocated to the Western and Northern lands of Poland and scattered with the purpose of their assimilation among the Polish ethnic group.

Thuswise, the pro-communist Polish government, having committed a direct act of genocide with the active support of the Soviets, virtually eliminated the Ukrainian population in the territory of Poland, destroyed the spiritual and material culture of the westernmost branch of Ukrainian society.

**W** The second stage. The eviction was organized on the basis of the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Republic of Poland “On the Soviet-Polish State Border” issued on August 16, 1945. In compliance with this Treaty, in 1948, 9,125 people were forcibly evicted toward the heartland of the Ukrainian SSR from the territory of the southwestern part of Turku district of the former Drohobych oblast, Lysk district (western Boykivshchyna), Mostysky, Medyky, Nizhankovetsky, Dobromilsky districts of the former Drohobych and Lviv oblasts which were transferred to Poland.

The third stage. The eviction was carried out in accordance with the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Republic of Poland “On the exchange of state territories” issued on February 15, 1951. Under this Treaty, in 1951, 32,066 Ukrainians and members of mixed families were forcibly displaced in the southern region of the Ukrainian SSR in the territory of the former Nizhny Ustrikovsky and parts of the Khiriv and Strelk districts of the former Drohobych region which were transferred to the Polish Republic.

**A** The eviction of Ukrainians in 1948 and 1951 from the territories and settlements transferred to Poland in the framework of demarcation of borders and exchange of sections of the state territories of settlements was carried out by the Soviet authorities with the participation of state security bodies without any hints of voluntariness.

Forced eviction from the native land was a time of inhumane testing for Ukrainians, their humiliation and abuse, splitting of entire communities and families, huge human, material and spiritual losses, brutal attitudes of Polish and Soviet authorities, arrests for the least resistance and national self-expression.

The mass eviction of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians from Poland to the Ukrainian SSR was virtually a prohibited topic for many years. And only recently, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the real scale of the tragedy was revealed.

**P** During the years of Ukraine’s independence, oblast councils, community-based veteran organizations that unite forcibly evicted people and their descendants, who stick together residing in Moscow, Volyn, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil oblasts and the city of Kyiv, have repeatedly addressed the President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, The Cabinet of Ministers with the demand to solve the most painful problems caused by the forced eviction of indigenous Ukrainians from the territory of Poland.

Stepan Romanyuk. The state and prospects of restoring the rights of Ukrainians who were forcibly evicted from the territory of Poland at the present stage. [www.holm.kiev.ua](http://www.holm.kiev.ua)

The project “Pawns” was printed with the support of the Kharkov book factory “Globus”



ONE OUGHT NOT TO SPEAK BADLY  
OF THE POLES, BECAUSE, IN A WAY,  
THEY ARE LIKE OUR SECOND HEART.



I can truthfully tell you that one ought not to speak badly of the Poles, because, in a way, they are like our second heart. And in the old days they used to beat and torture us. And we caused a lot of evil to them as well. Let me tell you a story. Back in the day, some musicians from another village used to come to our village. There were four of them. One played bass, another had a violin, and the third one had some kind of instrument as well. Everyone played something. One time they came to play at a wedding. And they played so well! The entire village gathered around those musicians. But after the wedding, they went through dibrova (oakery, grove). Do you know what dibrova means? It's a great pasture, it spans even from beyond the city of Lviv, ending somewhere across Poland. Those musicians stopped by in some village where only Poles lived, while our village had both Poles and Ukrainians. That Polish village was called Byalka. In there, three or four Poles attacked them. The Poles pulled out the musicians' finger-nails, teeth, cut off their tongues, poked out their eyes and let them go like this, alive. They did not have any compassion for our people at all.

## WHAT WAS POLISH WAS OURS AS WELL

We celebrate Polish Christmas, right? What was Polish was ours as well. We all knew that we were not supposed to work, to do anything on the day when Jesus Christ was born because it was the birthday of Jesus Christ, the little savior. I knew a Polish carol. I was about five years old, so I already knew a little something. And we did not do anything on that day because it was a great holiday for us. But when our Christmas came, right at dawn the Poles drove their horses to scatter manure on the vegetable gardens. Our people used to say to them: "Why are you doing so? We honor your Christmas and do not do anything on your holy day, so why aren't you doing the same?" But that didn't help. They did things like that. They did not want us, the Ukrainians, to be in that village and live with them. They were constantly trying to get rid of us. Then they started that

campaign. They targeted our church, which was made of wood beams. And I remember everything. Mom used to go to that church and she would always take me with her. And I did not want to go inside, so I sat on those beams that stretched out just enough for me to sit on. And I remember sitting there, hearing my mom singing inside and almost sliding down every time I dozed off. And then that campaign began and they set fire to the church, and the church burned down. I saw it burning.





Three days before this campaign a horrible thing happened when our cattle was grazing on that dibrova. We usually had one cowherd who tended the cattle, and early in the morning he would pass through the village and play his reed-pipe. When the villages heard the sound, they would bring their cattle out. They would give the cowherd some bread or whatever they had. And he guided the herd to pasture to graze for the whole day. That day we heard gun-shots. We were afraid that our cowherd had gotten killed. Everyone was afraid that something bad was going on. And they decided not to bring their cattle out to the herd. Some people had clover growing around, others had alfalfa, and everyone tied up their cattle to graze outside their houses.



I ASKED,  
“MOM, MOM, WHY ARE YOU  
CRYING?” I KISSED HER AND  
HUGGED HER...

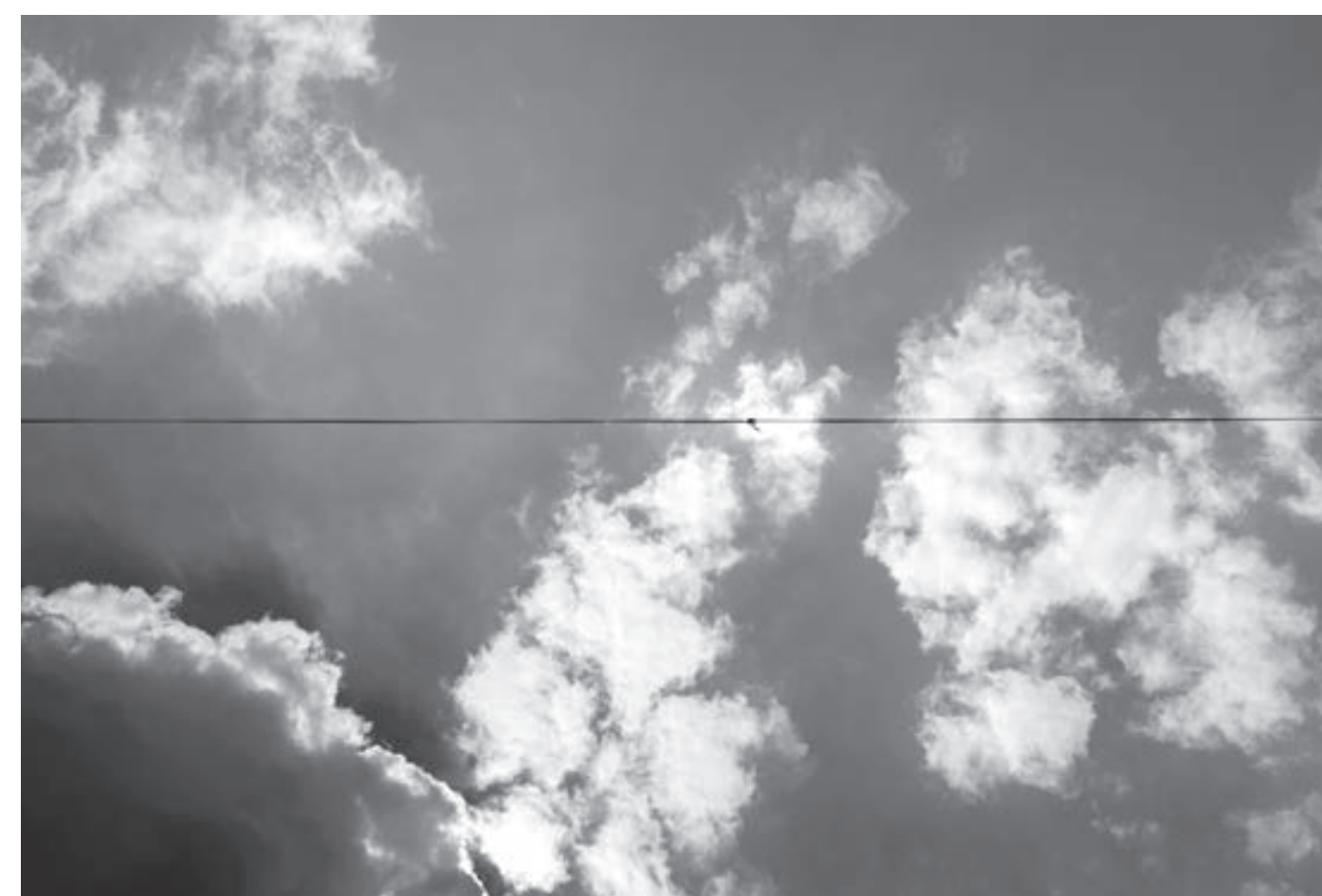
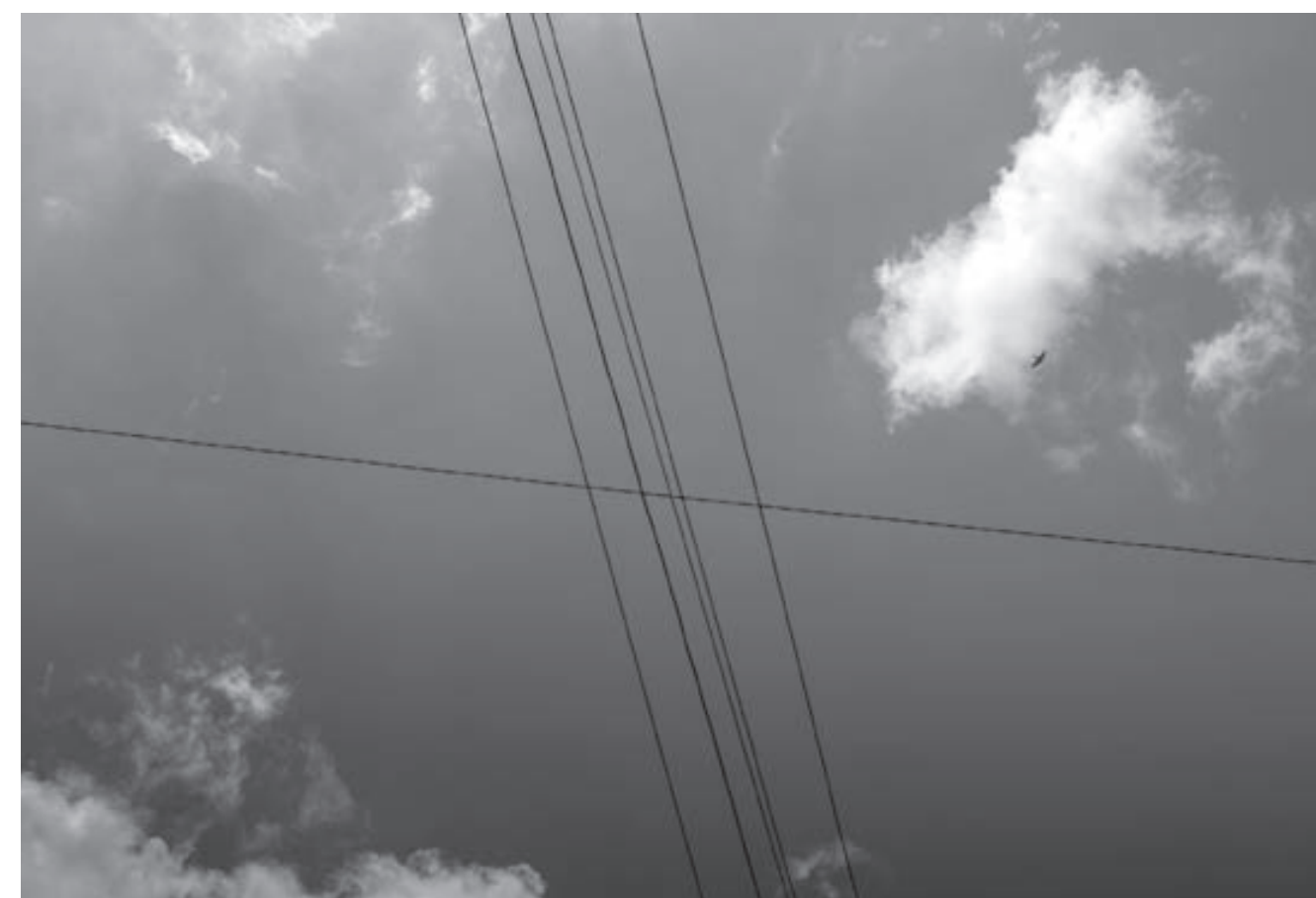
Then I saw my mother wailing and crying. She was weeping terribly. Mom was pregnant at the time, and I thought that something had happened with the baby. I asked, “Mom, Mom, why are you crying?” I kissed her and hugged her. Mom said that she had sent her son, my brother, to dibrova to tend our horse on the pasture, because the cowherd had refused to take it as it had injured legs and was all ragged. So, Mother had sent my brother. And then she heard gunshots and got very scared. What was happening was that on dibrova the Poles were taking all the cattle and killing all the people. But that horse saved my brother’s life. He found some marsh and got in there. There were leeches in it, and the Poles did not want to get into that bog for that ragged horse. My brother had hidden behind that horse, and that is how he stayed alive. Those people who did not bring their livestock to the pasture were lucky to have saved their animals, and all the rest of the animals were taken away from their owners. And we had six heads of cattle that the cowherd had brought to dibrova, and all of them were taken away. Three cows, two heifers and a horse. Only the horse with the injured legs, my brother’s savior, remained with us.



BUT, YOU KNOW,  
I SHOULDN'T  
BE TELLING YOU  
ALL THIS.  
BETTER KEEP QUIET.

B E C A U S E   A L L   O F   T H I S   I S   V E R Y   C O N -  
F U S I N G .   W H O   F I R E D   A T   W H O M ,   T H A T  
S O R T   O F   T H I N G .

E V E N   I F   Y O U   H A D   T W O   H E A D S   O N   O N E  
N E C K ,   Y O U   W O U L D   S T I L L   N O T   U N D E R -  
S T A N D   A L L   O F   I T .







One day my father went to the reading room in a neighboring village. That was like a club. There was a radio there. So Dad came from the reading room that day and said he had heard on the radio that we were about to get bombed. They said that airplanes would be dropping bombs on us.

HE SAID THAT A GERMAN HAD CONFIRMED THAT AT SUCH - AND - SUCH HOUR THEY WOULD BE DROPPING BOMBS ON US.

IN THE NEIGHBORING VILLAGE THEY KILLED EVERYONE ON THE VERY ANNUNCIATION DAY.

Only a few people managed to survive. They had a cow and a horse, and they came to our village.

And our hut was just on the border with that village, across the river. And they – it was a family – came to us. Because they had nowhere else to go. And we went to the station with them. As all our cattle had been taken away, we did not have anything. Even that ragged horse with the injured legs had been taken away from us.

There were four of them – that family. A man, his wife, brother and mother. The mother was a very old woman. I remember she sat me on her lap, covered me with her sheepskin coat and asked me to scratch her on the head. She had lice. And she said, “Seek them, seek them lice on me”. So I was scouting for the lice in her hair while we were riding on the fira (a sort of horse-drawn vehicle). So they saved us because we had nothing to move by and had no way of carrying our belongings. But thanks to those people, my mother managed to take a few items with us. A blanket, a small banyak (a metal case), some food. And they helped us so much. Their family name – I remember it to this day – was Gulinovsky.







And then we arrived at the station. And there was a boom barrier, ram it used to be called back then. And when that barrier would rise or go down, some nice music would play near it. Every time we all, the kids, would run up to it to listen to the nice music. So one of those times we saw a fire approaching, and we ran up to the boom barrier, as usual. The fire was filled with cabbage up to the brim. Suddenly we heard someone crying out from the inside of the pile: "Somebody, help me! Somebody, help me!" We were being guarded by Russian soldiers, and had it not been for them soldiers, I don't know how we would have survived. And so, those Russian soldiers had submachine-guns and they were guarding us. We ran up to them. Among us there were older children. And they asked the soldiers to check that cabbage. They agreed. They drove away the Poles sitting on top of that cabbage. They raked through the cabbage and pulled out a Ukrainian man. His hands were tied up, his legs were tied up, and he was tortured big time. But alive. And one of the soldiers told him that

H E        S H O U L D  
T H A N K        U S  
C H I L D R E N    A S  
W E ' D        S A V E D  
H I S    L I F E .



## WE WAITED FOR OUR TRAIN FOR TWO MONTHS

AT "JURAVITSA" STATION

We kept waiting on and on. And one day – here it comes, our echelon. Here is how it was there: a few [railroad] cars, and the rest were flatcars for cows, horses, cattle, whatever remained with people. And so we set out. The rails used to be wooden, and every couple of meters the wheels thumped upon those rails, and we had a few basins or banyaks, kind of, and all of that kept falling on our heads. And that's the way we went on. It wasn't a very long ride. It was the wait that was long.

We waited for our train, called "echelon", for two months at Juravitsa station, the largest Polish [railroad] station. We lived there like Gypsies. There were vegetable gardens around, and we would go there to nick potatoes and whatever else that was there. And we cooked on fire. My brother would go and collect some dry horse manure to kindle the fire with. Then we would put potatoes in the fire, and that's how we got by. There were many of us actually. Three villages had pulled together.





We arrived in Lviv. But there were some problems with the documents, I don't remember the details. But I do remember that the engine-driver had to move on, but he was delayed because of those documents, and he got furious and then just went on. And he brought us to Maksimovka. He said that we had to quickly unload our stuff because he was in a hurry. And we got off in Maxymivka.

THERE WERE SMALL HUTS  
THERE WITH SMALL WINDOWS,  
WHILE BACK IN POLAND THE  
HUTS WERE TALL AND THE  
WINDOWS WERE LARGE.





WE DIDN'T HAVE MANY OPTIONS OF HUTS  
TO CHOOSE FROM. THOSE WHO HAD FASTER  
HORSES GOT OFF THE TRAIN QUICKLY AND  
WERE THE FIRST ONES TO CHOOSE.



And as for us, some Pole picked us up and said we would be living in his pantry. They laid straw for us and so we slept. There was nothing in there, not even a kitchen. We made a stove from sheet iron and cooked on it. Mom had a flail and she would go thresh wheat at other people's houses. And so she earned grain and baked pliatzki (layer cakes) for us. She was pregnant to boot, and her belly was very big. But what was there to be done? We had to be fed somehow. And so, working with that flail, she did some harm to the baby, and it was born with a defect and died soon. She didn't live long. She was baptized Julia. And there, at that place, she was buried.



THE POLES THOUGHT  
THAT THEY WOULD LIVE WITH US  
IN THE VILLAGE...



The Poles thought that they would live with us in the village. But they could not. It was things like this: one would get up early and yell that someone had slaughtered his pig, and another one would cry out that someone had stolen his horses at night.

BUT THEY COULD NOT.



And so they got together and decided to go back where they belonged – to Poland. The Poles whose house we were living in left as well, so we stayed in their house. We had a nice vegetable garden, the yard was very large.





And then I got married and moved to the village of Travneve.  
It used to be called Zaruddia back in the day.



We are Pawns in the games played beyond our will, and we are taken up by “chessmen” and by frames within which we are expected to be placed and move.

We are Pawns of history, even if it seems to us that we understand history, we do not value ourselves in it at all, and we have convenient memes for all occasions, like this, for example: “What can I do by myself if there are millions like me around?”

We are but pawns. Cannon fodder with COMPARISON in every detail of our existence hammered, casually but firmly, into our heads. “More - Less” as a barrier to mutual understanding and cooperation on equal terms. This is done to prevent us even from even trying to solve historical issues.

The history of one village is the history of our “pawn-like” existence in the system of global games.

They all were displaced settlers. They were not permitted to live on their land. They were banned from returning to their native land. They were not even allowed to die and be buried beside their relatives.

The Wisla military operation and Babyn Yar are tremendous tragedies, but those of a lesser rank are doomed to be forgotten, and this oblivion leads to new tragedies. Sadly, the fates of such migrants as the Travneve residents are nothing but dust on the road from Poland to Ukraine.

Nobody cares about them. They quietly pray to their God, not a trace of suspicion in their meek souls that what was done to them was a crime.

They are lucky to have survived. And it didn't happen in the Middle Ages – only 65 years ago, imagine that. Just your typical displacement of people, a global mobility, a forced little trip. “But it wasn't to Siberia, at least,” the elders will say.

Everything is measured by the pain threshold and ability to forget.

Where there is humanism in our society, we still compare more or less wounded with today's war, we still feel the blame for allowing Donbass to be invaded.

But people of these days have never lived in times of war and do not know that their history is that of the enforced departure of people. They do not know what to do, how to fight. They have no idea what hardship and displacement are until they face them.

We cannot be fully prepared for pain to a greater or smaller extent. We just shouldn't put up with it. But, to this end, we need to learn lessons from real history and live through at least one actual case of justice being served.

The country is in conflicts from both sides. From the European civilized side, Polish nationalists exert pressure with their historical evidence but keep silent about the expulsion of the indigenous people. From the other side, the “czar” is marching towards us menacingly, each stride followed by an annexation of our lands. It's a dog's life for us PAWNS living here, in the center of the continent.

Reflections on the history of memory and displacements under art-influences comprised the basis of the project.

The study objects of the artist and curator are the village of Travneve, “peacefully” inhabited by denizens from different counties of Poland, memories of one of the migrants, the artifacts left in commemoration of the “campaign”, as well as today's peaceful life of the descendants of those forcibly displaced people.

EDITORIAL special edition of the newspaper:

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