

UKRAINIANS ABROAD: NEWS AND VIEWS #163

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1. Argentina. “Colonia Liebig tendrá un monumento único en Corrientes” [Colonia Liebig Will Have a Unique Monument in Corrientes], *Corrientes Hoy*, 24 April 2024.

La comunidad de Colonia Liebig recibió, con gran emoción, el busto de Taras Shevchenko, poeta y artista nacional de Ucrania, donado por la Colectividad Ucraniana de Apóstoles, Pueblos, Colonias y Norte de Corrientes.

«Agradecemos profundamente a la Colectividad Ucraniana y a su presidente Gabriel Boreski por este invaluable gesto que fortalece aún más los lazos de amistad y cooperación entre nuestras comunidades», expresaron desde las redes sociales oficiales.

«Próximamente, el busto de Taras Shevchenko se alzaré como símbolo de hermandad en las calles de Liebig, convirtiéndose en el primer monumento de este tipo en la Provincia de Corrientes. Homenaje que honrará la historia de los inmigrantes ucranianos que encontraron en nuestro suelo un refugio y la oportunidad de construir una nueva vida, buscando paz, trabajo y prosperidad para sus familias», destacaron.

Taras Shevchenko es una figura emblemática de la cultura ucraniana y representa la libertad, la justicia y la paz, valores que nos unen como pueblos. Su legado nos recuerda la importancia de la memoria, la cultura y la esperanza.

[English translation follows below – S.C.]

With much emotion, the community of Colonia Liebig [in the Province of Corrientes] received a bust of Taras Shevchenko, poet and national artist of Ukraine, donated by the Colectividad Ucraniana de Apóstoles, Pueblos, Colonias y Norte de Corrientes.

“We are profoundly grateful to the [organization] Colectividad Ucraniana and its president Gabriel Boreski for this invaluable gesture which further strengthens the ties of friendship and cooperation between our communities,” they expressed from official social media.

“Soon, the bust of Taras Shevchenko will be raised as a symbol of fraternity in the streets of Liebig, becoming the first monument of its kind in the Province of Corrientes. It will be a special honour that will recognize the history of Ukrainian immigrants who found in our land a refuge and the opportunity to build a new life, seeking peace, work, and prosperity for their families,” they noted.

Taras Shevchenko is an emblematic figure of Ukrainian culture and represents freedom, justice, and peace, values that unite us as people. His legacy reminds us of the importance of memory, culture, and hope.

** Colonia Liebig is in the Department of Ituzaingó, Corrientes, and borders on the Department of Apóstoles in the Province of Misiones. There are currently six monuments to Taras Shevchenko in Argentina. Three in Misiones (Apóstoles, Oberá, and Leandro N. Alem), two in the Province of Buenos Aires (Federal Capital and the Buenos Aires suburb of San Martín), and one in the Province of Chaco (Las Breñas). The inauguration of the monument in Colonia Liebig will thus make it the seventh in the country to Taras Shevchenko and the first in the Province of Corrientes. – S.C.*

2. Australia. “Help for War Effort,” *Hobart Mercury*, 15 May 2024.

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By Elise Kaine

New boats destined to help the Ukrainian war effort were given a test drive in calmer Hobart waters before being sent in the next package of support from the Australian Defence Force.

Tasmanian shipbuilders Sentinel Boats welcomed the ambassador for Ukraine as he inspected the new vessels under construction in Hobart on Tuesday morning.

Sentinel Boats CEO George McGuire said they were honoured to welcome Vasyl Myroshnychenko and to be one of the Australian companies selected to provide support on the Ukrainian frontline.

“It is the ultimate honour to have our craftsmanship and reliability trusted internationally and to have this opportunity to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine,” Mr McGuire said.

The new Sentinel 830R rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIBs) will form part of the \$100m military assistance package recently announced by the federal government.

More than two years into the invasion, thoughts were back in Ukraine as the Tasmanian Ukrainian community gathered at the International Friendship Wall to celebrate Europe Day with traditional Ukrainian food, music and entertainment. It was hosted by the Consular Corps of Tasmania and the Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania with support from the Delegation of the European Union to Australia.

Tassie for Ukraine member Hanna Ivanova fled Ukraine in 2022 with her two sons, now 16 and 7. She is part of the group of mostly refugee women who make traditional Ukrainian crafts, jewellery and knitted items to raise money to send to Ukrainian soldiers.

Ms Ivanova said when the war first broke out she wanted to stay in her home. “My friends here (in Australia) said come here because it’s very dangerous, why are you staying in the basement every single day,” she said.

She said it was hard to leave her childhood home but when a factory was hit – killing one person and injuring others – she changed her mind that morning. “It was a very big decision because I lived all my life in the house where I was born and I just asked ‘why’.”

3. Brazil. “In Brazil, a Book on the 130-Year History of the Ukrainian Community Was Presented.” *Odessa Journal*, 10 April 2024.

In the city of Curitiba, located in the state of Paraná, Brazil, a book presentation was held dedicated to the 130-year history of the Ukrainian community in Brazil titled “[130 Anos da Imigração Ucraniana para o Brasil].”

This event was organized by the Ukrainian World Congress.

Curitiba serves as the capital of the state and the center of Ukrainian culture in Brazil, while Paraná hosts the largest Ukrainian community. Ukrainian is the second official language in [Prudentópolis] municipality. The event was hosted by the Ukrainian Society of Brazil – SUBRAS and the folklore club Poltava.

Among the participants was Vitorio Sorotyuk, the president of the Ukrainian-Brazilian Central Representation, who is one of the editors of this valuable book.

The book is available for purchase at the UKRA BAR restaurant in Curitiba and at the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Society of Brazil.

4. Canada. “Ukrainian Association of Moncton Hosts Easter Event,” *Times and Transcript*, 21 March 2024.

By Alan Cochrane

The Ukrainian Association of Moncton will hold its annual Easter Bazar Saturday at the Coverdale Centre in Riverview.

The event will be held Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Coverdale Centre, 50 Runneymeade Road, in Riverview.

Admission is \$5 for adults and free for children under 13.

“This vibrant event showcases Ukrainian culture, arts, crafts, traditional foods, and performances, aimed at celebrating and supporting the Ukrainian community,” association president Natalia Haidash said. “This event also serves as a crucial fundraising effort to support Ukrainians affected by the ongoing conflict, with proceeds dedicated to essential supplies and cultural activities.”

The Ukrainian community in Moncton has grown by over 1,000 in the last two years as many families came to Canada to escape the violence and destruction since the Russian invasion of their country.

The association said the bazaar will be a festive celebration of Ukrainian culture, food, music, culture art and traditions.

The event will include a workshop on painting Ukrainian Easter eggs and another on preparing traditional Easter meals. The Ukrainian Easter Brunch Workshop (11:30-12:30) will be \$45 per person or \$80 per couple. Instructors Svitlana Nesterenko and Lilia Symyrenko will guide participants through the symbolism, significance and traditions associated with each dish.

There will also be workshop on the ancient art of Pysanka, Ukrainian Easter egg workshop for \$40 per person from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Experienced artists will share the history and symbolism of this craft with participants.

The food and drink of Ukraine includes varenyky (perogies) and borscht, the traditional soup made with beets, to cured meat and homemade sausages, and baked goods.

There will also be traditional arts, crafts, and performances by local singers, dancers and musicians.

The association says funds raised through the event are used to purchase and distribute essential supplies for the Ukrainian Army, including IFAKs medical kits, medications, protective gear and heating element.

“Our mission is to ensure that the brave soldiers defending Ukraine have the resources they need to carry out the defence of our homeland,” the association said.

5. Canada. “Supporters of Ukraine Gather at Legislature Waving Blue and Yellow,” *Times Colonist*, 7 January 2024.

By Michael John Lo

Dozens waving the colours of yellow and blue were at the B.C. legislature in support of Ukraine on Saturday afternoon.

Promoted by the Ukrainian Cultural Centre and Help Ukraine Vancouver Island Society as a way to be “Ukraine's voice” from Victoria, the demonstration called on Victorians as well as Canada to remember the war in Ukraine that started when Russia invaded in February 2022.

Organizers cited the recent heavy air strikes that hit Ukrainian cities between Dec. 29 and Jan. 2 - the largest aerial attack since Russia began its invasion - as a reason to gather.

“During each massive shelling, Ukrainians feel as if they were taken to a collective firing squad: if this time it was not them who died, then someone else,” they wrote.

Rally attendee Valentyna Kolisnyk, who is originally from eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro, said she is grateful to the Ukrainian diaspora as well as others who showed up to the demonstration. The 24-year-old who arrived in Victoria on her own about a year ago, thanked Victorians for their support. “I often cried after talking to Canadians because they always tried to provide any help,” she said in an email.

Much of her family is still in Dnipro, which was targeted in the recent shelling. Ukrainian officials said that four maternity hospital patients were rescued from a fire, five people were killed and 20 injured in Dnipro during the 18-hour missile onslaught on Dec. 29.

“We want to remind Canadians and the whole world that the war is not over, people are dying, children are dying because Russia’s missiles are killing them every day,” Kolisnyk said.

Kolisnyk said her younger sister and her mother will arrive in Victoria in about three weeks. Her grandparents and her brother will remain in Ukraine. Feb. 24 will mark two full years since Russia began its invasion of Ukraine.

6. Canada. “Prince Albert Ukrainians Celebrate First Christmas on New Date,” *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 30 December 2023.

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Pages 1, 2.

By Jason Kerr

For the first time in more than a century, Ukrainians in Prince Albert and across the world will not celebrate Christmas on Jan. 7. Instead, 2023 marked the first year the Ukrainian diaspora celebrated Christmas on Dec. 25. The Ukrainian government passed legislation in July that made

the date change official. The laws came after two of the country's largest orthodox denominations switched from the Julian Calendar used by the Russian Orthodox Church, to the Gregorian calendar, where Christmas falls on the 25th.

"We will now be coming together and uniting and celebrating Christmas as everyone else does with the Gregorian calendar," said Sonya Jahn, a local resident who has led the volunteer effort to resettle Ukrainian families in Prince Albert.

"It's a little bit strange for the newcomers who have traditionally celebrated on the Julian calendar. There are still some traditions that will be continued in terms of Ukrainian culture."

Scheduling conflicts prevented Jahn and her family from having Christmas on the 25th, so instead they'll get together on Saturday, Dec. 30. On Christmas, Jahn and other longtime residents spent the day with new Ukrainian families. She said the date change didn't feel strange for her at all.

"The cultural traditional around the holiday season is to get together with friends and family," Jahn said. "I mean, (it's) no different than what we do here in Canada, although it's special. It brought back a lot of nostalgia for me from the time when I was a little girl."

The Ukrainian government cited the desire for Ukrainian traditions and holidays unconnected to Russia when approving the date change. Ukraine is in the second winter of its war against Russia. The Russian army invaded the country on Feb. 4, 2022.

Jahn said she has no doubts the date change is permanent. She said many Ukrainian families in Prince Albert are still stunned by the Russian invasion.

"People who have fled and who have come here to Prince Albert are just still bewildered and shocked," she said. "They had been living a very peaceful life, (and) all of a sudden their lives were turned upside down, their homes destroyed, their livelihoods destroyed, and basically (they're) fleeing for their lives."

Although the calendar has changed, it might take a while for the effects to settle in. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has historic ties to Russia and says it is no longer aligned with the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the church still recognizes Jan. 7 as the official Christmas date.

Two other denominations, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, held Christmas services on Dec. 25. However, many cultural groups still have celebrations planned for Malanka on Jan. 13, which marks the New Year instead of Jan. 1. The Prince Albert Barveenok Ukrainian Dancers are one of several Saskatchewan-based Ukrainian cultural groups still performing on Malanka. They'll be in ringing in the New Year at Elks Ridge Resort on Jan. 13 instead of Jan. 1. Club president Kayleigh Skomorowski said many of these Malanka performances were likely booked before the calendar change became official.

However, Skomorowski said the calendar change may not impact Saskatchewan for a few years.

“There are still some people, particularly those of us outside of Ukraine in the diaspora, who are still kind of reluctant to let go of that whole identity piece of celebrating Ukrainian Christmas and Ukrainian New Years on January 7 and January 13,” she explained. “Not everybody’s necessarily quite, I would say, informed or understanding of why the Ukrainian Church has made their choice to pull away from that.

“I think that we’ll probably still see some families continuing to celebrate on those traditional days in the Julian Calendar just based on how they identify as a Ukrainian Canadian.” For dance groups like Barveenok, who are often booked to perform on Malanka, that could mean multiple performance dates next year. Skomorowski expects a “patchwork situation” where different communities celebrate Malanka on different dates.

“For the ones who aren’t necessarily connected to the church any more, I think that idea of Ukrainian Christmas and Ukrainian New Year’s happening when they are is just a way for people to kind of set themselves apart from mainstream culture, not necessarily because the church was recognizing those days at those times,” she said.

7. France. “‘We Are Not in a Position to Make Plans’: The Uncertain Exile of Ukrainians in France,” *France24.com*, 24 February 2024.

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By Sonya Ciesnik

France, Feb. 24 -- Two years after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the end of the war is nowhere in sight. Ukrainian refugees in France are each adapting in their own way, with many preparing to stay for the long term.

Two years of Russia’s war in Ukraine have forced over 14 million people - nearly one third of Ukraine’s population- to flee their homes, according to the UN. Around 69,000 of those people have found refuge in France as of January 2024.

The figure is modest compared to European countries like Poland and Germany, which have welcomed five to 10 times that amount, but it reflects less a lack of generosity on the part of the French than the desire of Ukrainian refugees to seek shelter where there is already a large Ukrainian diaspora. The situation of Ukrainian refugees in France is “uncertain” and “evolving”, according to many of the exiles themselves.

“My situation and that of the other [Ukrainian] musicians is very unique because we are in France for work, and we never had to live off of subsidies,” said Anna Stavychenko, the head of a special mission of the Paris Philharmonic that coordinates temporary contracts with French orchestras for Ukrainian musicians displaced by the war. “Yet the situation is unstable: we do not know how long we will have our jobs, and we are not in a position to make any other plans besides day-to-day activities.”

Maryna Kumeda, author of “Journal d’une Ukrainienne” (“Journal of a Ukrainian”) and member of the Ukrainian human rights organisation Right to Protection, said the ongoing war was tearing

families apart. “People who arrive in France with their children generally have a harder time returning to Ukraine because it means exposing the children to bombing and interrupting their schooling,” she said.

Women in exile remain separated for months or years at time from their husbands and partners, as men between the ages of 18 and 60 have been prohibited from leaving Ukraine since the declaration of martial law following Russia’s invasion. The distance may be contributing to what some Ukrainian mental health professionals are calling a “divorce epidemic”, with the number of Ukrainian marriages ending last year twice or even three times as high as before the war.

“People want to go home but they ask themselves- is there work, is it safe?” said Kumeda. Some make a leap of faith and return, despite all the uncertainty. A hairstylist from Bucha exiled in France recently took a bus back to Kyiv, despite facing a lower salary and fewer clients.

In another case, a woman temporarily left her child in the care of his grandparents in France and went back to Ukraine. “She missed her husband and she hadn’t been home for two years,” said Kumeda.

‘Caught between two countries’

Factors such as care obligations and the breakdown of family units may prevent the integration of Ukrainian refugee women, noted an OECD study from 2023. The availability of adequate child care is an important factor for parents with young children to integrate into the workforce. Another study found that three in ten refugees could not work because of childcare obligations, and it was more often a problem for Ukrainian women (33 percent) than men (9 percent).

Other challenges mentioned by Ukrainian refugees included learning the French language. Most Ukrainians do not speak French, but numerous cities across France have allowed Ukrainian refugees with “temporary protection” status to benefit from French language courses. When encountering administrative difficulties, some refugees said they depended on the support of local communities for help in resolving them.

Many refugees report feeling “caught between two countries”. They are grateful for the asylum they found in France but unable to detach themselves from their prior lives in Ukraine.

“This has been a difficult and painful period for Ukrainians,” said Mykyta Zigura, a Ukrainian artist and refugee currently living in Nice. “We support Ukraine with all our might by giving donations and organising activities while trying to adapt to life in France- for the future of our children, and for the privilege of experiencing life in a highly developed country like France,” he said.

Mykyta’s brother, Egor Zigura, said he was grateful to have access to the same services and rights as French citizens, such as insurance, granted through the temporary protection status given to Ukrainians since the war began. “Thanks to the support of French society, many of us have started to adapt and we have the possibility to develop, work and live a full life despite the war, and while continuing to support Ukraine.” He added that Ukrainian associations in France,

like Nice's AFUCA, were helping support and integrate Ukrainians into local communities and acting as intermediaries between French and Ukrainian nationals.

Many Ukrainian refugees say they firmly believe support for their cause has not diminished over time. For Egor, everyone should oppose Russian aggression because "the soldiers in Ukraine are not only defending the borders of our country, they are stopping the enemy forces from advancing across Europe. It is more important than ever to unite and stop the enemy."

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8. General. "Ukrainian Diaspora Organize Record-Setting 'StandWithUkraine' Rally," Kyiv Post, 26 February 2024.

On Feb. 24, 2024, Ukrainian communities and diaspora organizations held 1,023 actions supporting Ukraine in 746 cities in 69 countries on all continents of the world, including Antarctica.

By UWC | February 26, 2024, 3:49 pm

The World Congress of Ukrainians reported record numbers of people turned out for rallies in support of Ukraine on Feb. 24, the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Participants, many of them Ukrainian diaspora and Ukrainians who recently fled Russia's war, registered their events on an interactive map created jointly by the World Congress of Ukrainians (WUC) and Ukrainian Truth.

The largest events were in Germany, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Paul Grod, the President of the Ukrainian World Congress, addressed a rally at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., a prominent symbol of American democracy.

"The Ukrainian World Congress and all our friends around the world are calling on the international community to give Ukraine what it needs to win. It needs more weapons and it needs more ammunition. We need to increase sanctions and we need to seize Russian assets. We need to make Russia pay," stated Paul Grod during his speech.

In Prague, Czech President Petr Pavel inaugurated a large pro-Ukrainian action; in Brussels, the European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders joined the peaceful rally.

The 28th Ukrainian Antarctic expedition members sent a video message from the icy continent.

Photos and more details about the global rally are available here

[<https://www.ukrainianworldcongress.org/stand-with-ukraine-global-rally-unfolds-in-over-700-cities-69-countries-updating/>].

9. General. “Zelensky Proposes Multiple Citizenship for Diaspora and Foreign Fighters on the Day of Unity,” *Kyiv Post*, 22 January 2024.

Except for Russian citizens, the new law will allow ethnic Ukrainians and their descendants around the world, as well as all those who fight for Ukraine’s freedom, to also have Ukrainian citizenship.

President Volodymyr Zelensky announced the introduction of a draft law that will allow people with Ukrainian citizenship to also hold citizenship in other nations, except for citizens of the Russian Federation.

The new multiple citizenship law will allow foreigners fighting for Ukraine and the ethnic Ukrainian diaspora to hold a Kyiv-issued passport without renouncing their citizenship elsewhere. The sole exception is “except for citizens of the aggressor country.”

During his address on the Day of Unity, Zelensky said: “Everyone who has Ukrainian blood in their veins and a free heart beating in their chest. Ukrainians by origin, who have long proven that they are Ukrainians in spirit. And after many years of waiting, they should finally become Ukrainians by passport.”

“Today I am submitting to the Verkhovna Rada a key draft law that will allow the adoption of comprehensive legislative amendments and the introduction of multiple citizenship,” Zelensky said.

According to Zelensky, the adoption of the law will allow all ethnic Ukrainians and their descendants, who “during various emigration waves, were forced to leave their homeland and ended up in Europe, the United States, Canada, countries of Asia and Latin America,” as well as “foreign volunteers who took up arms to defend Ukraine, all those who fight for Ukraine’s freedom” to obtain Ukrainian citizenship.

“All those who help us despite being hundreds and thousands of kilometers away from their homeland...” Zelensky said. “All those who fight for Ukraine’s freedom as if it were their homeland. And Ukraine will become such for them. For everyone who can feel that ‘being in Ukraine’ means ‘being at home’ – not as tourists, but as citizens. Citizens of a great, united, single Ukraine.”

Zelensky also signed the Decree “On the Territories of the Russian Federation Historically Inhabited by Ukrainians.”

About the decree, he said: “We must take steps not only to strengthen the unity of Ukraine and our people, but also to act for the unity of rights and freedoms, the truth about Ukrainians, the truth about us, and the truth about our history.

“This is the restoration of truth about the historical past for the sake of Ukraine’s future.”

10. Latvia. “Ukrainians in Latvia Mark Vyshyvanka Day,” *Eng.LSM.lv*, 16 May 2024.

“Not just Vyshyvanka Day!” - this is the name given to the Ukrainian community march and charity event that took place in Riga on Thursday. Ukrainians from all over Latvia gathered for a united march on the occasion of World Vyshyvanka Day, Latvian Television reports.

The aim is to show Ukraine’s national pride - the embroidered shirt “vyshyvanka” - and to highlight the crimes committed by Russia against Ukraine.

V[y]shyvanka Day is celebrated annually on the third Thursday of May in Ukraine and now worldwide. The embroidered shirt is a symbol of Ukraine’s national identity, unity, and rich cultural heritage. Today, the Ukrainian embroidered shirt has a special meaning in the war launched by Russia: Ukrainians are forced to defend their national authenticity and to give their lives in the fight for it. Vyshyvanka is not just a garment, it is a talisman.

The gathering of Ukrainians in Riga was not just a celebration of the Vyshyvanka. During the march, Ukrainians also demanded the return of Ukrainian children taken captive.

Ukraine’s Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Latvia Anatolii Kutsevol stressed that for every Ukrainian, the vyshyvanka is more than a national costume - it reflects the unity and identity code of the nation.

On Thursday, World Vishivanka Day, some members of the Latvian Parliament wore shirts with Ukrainian national patterns, while an exhibition showing the variety of colorful national costumes was opened at the Parliament. The photo exhibition of Ukrainian national costumes from the collection of the Ivan Honchar Museum shows examples of traditional clothing and embroidery from different regions of Ukraine. Each region has its own embroidery traditions and ornamental symbolism, and each handmade shirt is unique and unrepeatable.

11. Poland. “Ukrainians in Poland: New Normal,” *Kyiv Post*, 3 June 2024.

By Michał Kujawski

Poles and Ukrainians share a long interconnected history. So perhaps it’s no wonder that Ukrainian refugees have been relatively successful in integrating into Polish society.

After the outbreak of the full-scale war, millions of Ukrainian refugees crossed the Polish border, fleeing from Russian aggression. Hearing Ukrainian conversations on the streets of Polish cities no longer surprises anyone – it has become a part of the landscape. When speaking of Ukrainians living in Poland, the first thing that comes to mind is war refugees seeking safe shelter. However, this is not the full picture – the issue is much more complex and it goes for the economy, social integration, and all other aspects of life. Who are they, what is their life like in Poland, how do they interact with Poles, and what are the prospects for the future?

The background

Currently it's estimated that roughly one million Ukrainian citizens live in Poland, though determining the actual number, which would include Poles of Ukrainian descent, is challenging. This calculation is further complicated by the fact that many Ukrainians frequently travel between Poland, Ukraine, and other countries. This migration is mainly due to family reasons, seasonal work, or cross-border trade. In attempting to depict the contemporary Ukrainian community living in Poland, one must start with the end of World War II and present the three main waves of resettlement, migration, and refugees.

The first of these is the resettlement of 140,000 Ukrainians, Lemkos, and Polish-Ukrainian families from the southeastern territories of contemporary Poland to the Pomerania region as part of the Operation Vistula campaign in 1947-1950. Over several generations, despite efforts to preserve their cultural heritage, this population has been largely Polonized and assimilated. However, it doesn't mean that their heritage has disappeared – today, one can still see worshippers attending Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, and many families celebrate Christmas twice a year – Latin-rite in December and Byzantine-rite in January.

Several decades later, according to the national census conducted in 2011, over 50,000 Polish citizens declared Ukrainian or dual Polish and Ukrainian nationality. The next significant increase in Ukrainian migration to Poland took place between 2014 and 2022 and it was driven by Ukraine's political and economic situation. In 2021, there were 1.45 million Ukrainian citizens legally residing in Poland.

The situation changed with the Russian invasion in February 2022. Nearly 9 million refugees crossed the Polish border and 1.55 million of them took advantage of temporary protection in Poland. The numbers perfectly illustrate the scale and nature of this phenomenon. It was a significant humanitarian challenge for Poland.

Yet society and central and local authorities managed it well. Despite the massive number of refugees, the creation of refugee camps was avoided, which was unprecedented on a global scale. We can distinguish two main waves of refugees. The first consisted mainly of people from larger cities, characterized by better economic situations and foreign language skills. The second wave was driven by displacement – many refugees who previously lived in frontline areas, occupied territories, or directly threatened by the Russian invasion sought refuge in Poland.

Ukrainian refugees in Poland

The refugees who arrived in Poland differ significantly from previous migrations. Unlike economic migrants, they didn't leave their homes willingly – they were forced to flee due to war. So, what does their life look like in Poland and what impact do they have on the country?

“According to our observations, refugees from Ukraine are very active in the labor market. We have the highest rate in the EU – about 70% of working-age individuals are employed. Even more express a will to work, but they cannot do so due to, for example, the need of taking care of children. Ukrainian refugees establish their own businesses, develop themselves and archive their professional ambitions. They don't want to work below their qualifications or rely on what the market offers but want to create it themselves,” said Bartłomiej Potocki, Director of the

Department of Social Integration at the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

This is confirmed by the facts – in 2023, out of over 300,000 companies founded in Poland, 10 percent were established by Ukrainians. Viktoria Pogrebniak, an activist from Euromaidan Warsaw, shares a similar opinion: “Most people adapted to life in Poland, however in the beginning the new rules were surprising for them. I can confidently say that after 2 years, 80 percent of the community has integrated with Polish society. They work and establish businesses. We can see synergy between Poles and Ukrainians in Poland.”

An essential element of integration and starting a new life is education. It’s crucial to note that a significant majority of refugees are women and children. All underage children in Poland are subject to compulsory education. Their parents can choose between Polish schools or online classes in Ukrainian schools. Poland provides a monthly support of around \$203 available to all children until they turn 18. However, changes are announced. From June 2025 the benefit will only apply to children attending Polish schools. As a result, an increase in students at the expense of Ukrainian online schools is expected.

Were Polish schools ready to accommodate such a large number of new students? “We see systemic shortcomings, but it doesn’t result from ill will. Simply put, till now Poland wasn’t the destination for such a large group of refugees,” said Potocki. “Our teaching and teacher professional development programs didn’t account for working with a multicultural environment. We are trying to make up for this. Certain problems arise in humanities subjects such as history or Polish language classes. They require teachers to be very sensitive. Currently, we are working on introducing intercultural assistants to schools, which will ultimately facilitate many things. The large wave of refugees was a sudden shock for Poland. Today we recognize it as a new normal,” added the ministry official.

Socialization and integration are also key functions of the education system. “Problems arise in overcrowded schools. There is competition for resources. Potocki added.

Upon closer inspection, one might get the impression that despite some difficulties, mutual coexistence and gradual integration of Poles and Ukrainians are progressing successfully – and indeed, it’s not an incorrect conclusion.

However, there are certain challenges. Ukrainians face issues common to all residents of Poland, such as housing problems. Many refugees are unaware of their rights regarding the job market. Concerns also arise when it comes to the future of their legal status. “After two years spent in Poland, people want to plan their future. Extending the special refugee status raises uncertainty. What will the future of refugees look like when this status expires?” noted Viktoria Pogrebniak. Uncertainty among Ukrainians – especially men – is also fueled by ideas of repatriating them back to Ukraine, such as when the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs temporarily suspended consular services for draft-age men recently. It’s a controversial topic. Many men from Ukraine have been living in Poland for years, running their businesses, starting families, and having loans. Others, while working in Poland, financially support their families who remain in Ukraine.

This issue doesn’t concern Ukrainian citizens only – it would be a significant challenge for the

Polish job market.

Social coexistence is a process which has its own rules and dynamics, leading to both friendships and conflicts. After more than two years since the Russian aggression against Ukraine, one can observe that Poles got used to the war. Positive emotions have waned over time and Ukrainian refugees aren't considered as guests anymore – they have become neighbors to Poles. However, these positive emotions, solidarity and friendship aren't a reliable reference point for the overall long-term picture.

The future challenges: integration vs. assimilation

Despite generally very good mutual coexistence, the future raises many questions. One of them concerns the fact that many refugees will remain in Poland permanently. “Compared to economic migrants, many refugees cannot declare their willingness to stay in Poland, undertake further migrations, or return to Ukraine. We estimate that if the war were to end this year, 30 percent of refugees would permanently remain in Poland,” Potocki said. “With each passing year, this number will increase. According to our calculations, it could even reach 50 to 60 percent. We are preparing our system to be able to integrate such a number of refugees into Polish society.”

Integration policy, of course, can take various forms. One can distinguish Polonization through the assimilation process or aiming to become an active participant in social life.

What does Polish policy look like in this regard? “We believe that integration means the ability to preserve one's history, culture and heritage. We support Ukrainian diaspora organizations. We cannot speak of a proper integration process if refugees are unable to keep and maintain their identity,” Potocki added.

However, the mission of Ukrainian NGOs goes beyond simply protecting their heritage. “Euromaidan Warsaw, as an organization representing Ukrainian community, is very active. We do a lot of work to integrate our societies. We organize workshops, language courses and try to connect both cultures, but it's just a drop in the ocean of needs. There should be hundreds of such initiatives,” Pogrebniak said.

Besides integration activities, Euromaidan Warsaw works to support Ukraine on a humanitarian level as well as it supports its EU aspirations. Despite mentioned challenges, the integration processes will continue and we can already see their effects on the streets of Polish cities today. Ukrainians have become full-fledged members of society. Undoubtedly, they will become increasingly active in the public sphere and over the years, many of them will become Polish citizens and voters.

New reality

Ukrainians have always been present in Poland and their societies have intersected with each other. But the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a new reality, a new normal.

Despite the challenges related to changing environments, integration and understanding the rules and laws in Poland, social coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians appears very promising. Certainly, mutual adaptation and the settling of Ukrainian refugees have been facilitated by cultural proximity, the immense empathy shown by Poles at the outbreak of the invasion as well as the actions taken by the state. The scale of conflicts should not be a cause for concern either – they are a completely natural aspect of social coexistence. The future will depend on Ukrainians and Poles themselves, including both societies and politicians.

Michał Kujawski, a Warsaw-based journalist focusing on the CEE region, and former Head of Current Affairs at TVP World, is a Special Correspondent for Kyiv Post.

12. Poland. “Most Foreigners in Poland Come from Ukraine,” *PAP English News Service*, 23 February 2024.

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By Aleksandra Jezierska

An overwhelming majority of foreigners settling down in Poland come from Ukraine, the data has shown.

According to the Foreigners Office’s data, Ukrainians constitute 80 percent of the total number of foreigners residing in the country.

Two years since the start of the war with Russia, about 950,000 Ukrainians are staying in Poland under temporary protection, Jakub Dudziak, the Foreigners Office’s spokesperson, has reported. Such immigrants are issued the PESEL identification number.

“Around 75 percent of adult Ukrainian citizens under temporary protection are women... Every second Ukrainian registered is a child,” Dudziak said.

Over 1.49 million foreigners hold valid resident permits, compared to 1.4 million in the previous year.

The Ukrainian diaspora is concentrated mainly in provinces with large urban agglomerations. The data do not include foreigners staying in Poland based on visas and visa-free travel regulations. (PAP)

13. Romania. “Ukrainian Community to Support Public Policies Aimed at Strengthening Romania’s Role as EU and NATO Country (Petretchi),” *AGERPRES*, 4 April 2024.

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Bucharest, April 4 /Agerpres/ - The 20 years anniversary since the accession to NATO and 75 years since the formation of the North Atlantic Alliance represents an excellent opportunity for reflection regarding the consolidation of Romania’s role in maintaining national and regional security and, at the same time, in deterring and combating conventional and hybrid threats,

stated, the chairman of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania (UUR), deputy Nicolae-Miroslav Petretchi, said on Thursday.

“The Ukrainian community in Romania actively and constantly participated in Romania’s rapprochement to NATO, in creating the conditions for reaching the standards and fulfilling specific criteria for accession, as well as in assuming an active role as a NATO member country, in a region with permanent geopolitical convulsions. Also, the Ukrainian community in Romania will always support, without reservations, public policies aimed at strengthening Romania’s role as an EU and NATO member state, being equally not only a relevant contributor to the creation and application of these public policies, but also a direct beneficiary of theirs,” the deputy of national minorities pointed out.

According to him, today, Romania and Ukraine have the historic opportunity to build a stable partnership in the field of security, which will make Romania even safer and stronger, paving, at the same time, Ukraine’s road towards the Alliance.

The representative in Parliament of UUR highlighted that the role of the Ukrainian community in Romania in facilitating the Euro-Atlantic path of K[yi]v can be “extremely relevant” in the current geopolitical context. “The Ukrainian community in Romania represents a model of integration of an ethnic community in state life that can be replicated in European and Euro-Atlantic Ukraine and, at the same time, a model of its conduct regarding its participation in public policies on consolidating Romania's role and position in the EU and NATO,” Petretchi said.

AGERPRES (RO - author: Catalina Matei, editor: Claudia Stanescu; EN - author: Catalin Cristian Trandafir, editor: Simona Iacob)

14. Russia. “Ukrainians in Russia: When, How and Why Did Largest Ukrainian Diaspora Disappear from View?” *Ukrinform*, 8 February 2024.

Or what one Zelensky decree means for the life of the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia

The Decree on “Historically inhabited by Ukrainians territories of the Russian Federation” signed by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky on the day of Unity of Ukraine, January 22, 2024, is still being discussed on professional platforms and in social media. And here we can fully agree with the opinion of Askold Lozynsky, a lawyer and longtime head of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC, the coordinating organization of all Ukrainian diasporas in the world), that the authorities have only now turned their attention to Ukrainians living in Russia. In fact, the urgency of such a legislative initiative is 15 years overdue.

Another controversial issue is the absence of some territories densely populated by ethnic Ukrainians among those listed in the decree: in particular, the so-called Green Wedge in the Far East. And another, no less complicated question is whether it is realistic to return Ukrainians who wish to do so to their homeland at this time of war and closed borders.

In any case, there is a common vision that the full-scale invasion has changed the optics of the Ukrainian authorities towards fellow citizens who found themselves “on our land, not theirs” (Taras Shevchenko).

Would such a decree have appeared without the full-scale invasion? This is a rhetorical question, but it is also important for understanding the changes in Ukraine’s geopolitical approaches and the rapidity of these changes. But first things first...

How many and where do Ukrainians live in Russia?

The history of Ukrainians and their settlement and even colonization of Russian territories is linked to many political and historical factors. For example, the borders of Ukraine, which were defined in 1917 and later, did not fully take into account the ethnic component during the Soviet era. Historical channels, such as History for Adults

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjVtT2wrdAs>] and Taras Shevchenko

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnYJDqiZHPw&list=PLC83J-okhj1egqhtZC1Ih1Q4btUmpAYUa&index=2>], will help us understand the historical causes and

preconditions of Ukrainian migrations and the territorial boundaries of the metropolis and colony.

We will record some important data from open sources that will allow us to understand more about how the largest diaspora of Ukrainians turned into a virtually invisible one. There is still no consensus on the number of Ukrainians living in the Russian Federation. Figures range from 10 million (Askold Lozynsky), approximately 5 million (Alexander Alfeyorov) to 1.1 million (based on the 2010 Russian census). It is important to note here that this data cannot be confirmed or denied, as we have not had any research on this topic since 2014. Unfortunately.

The most numerous Ukrainian communities were in Moscow, St. Petersburg, as well as autochthonous settlements in the areas of Kursk, Voronezh, Saratov, Samara, Astrakhan, Vladivostok, Kuban (Krasnodar Territory), Don, from Orenburg to the Pacific Ocean, and in the same area called by Ukrainians the Green Wedge, the southern part of the Far East with important cities such as Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and Ussuriysk. It is home to the descendants of Ukrainians who were resettled more than 100 years ago 10,000 kilometers from their homeland as part of Stolypin’s reforms.

In general, the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia is (or was) the largest of the Ukrainian diasporas in the world. Based on 2010 census data, almost 2 million Ukrainians, or 1.4% of the total population, lived in Russia, making them the third largest ethnic group after Russians and Tatars in Russia.

The ethnic policy of the USSR never promoted Ukrainian identity, although it declared national equality. And the highest peak of Ukrainian activism in Russia was the time of independence of “greater Ukraine” in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It was during this period that national and cultural centers of Ukrainian life in Russia were created. Schools, including Sunday schools (for language and culture), clubs, branches of the

Prosvita society, art magazines, the press, musical groups, and libraries began to function. Ukrainians in Russia established close contact with Ukraine.

How Ukrainians began to be harassed

The example of the Kuban Cossack Choir is indicative of many processes of the recent Russification of Ukrainians in Russia. In the 1990s and into the 2000s, this group often toured Ukraine. Among its members, a significant number were Ukrainians from the Kuban, and its repertoire included Ukrainian songs. The head of the choir, Viktor, assured me that they continue to preserve a strong Ukrainian tradition, and that they speak Ukrainian (“Balachka”) in everyday life and during rehearsals, although less and less.

But. Since 2014, Viktor Zakharchenko has been included in the Myrotvorets list for supporting the annexation of Crimea and signing a letter in support of Putin. We know that during the recent presentation of a Russian award to him, Zakharchenko said that he was “praying for Putin” because he was fulfilling his “royal duty.” As far as we can tell, the choir has completely switched to everything Russian.

So, when did this shift occur? What preceded the transition of the Ukrainian diaspora’s rapid flourishing into a silent desert?

The bifurcation point is 2008, when the Russian side began to curtail Ukrainian organizations. And this process began simultaneously with the attack on almost all officially registered organizations. The first to come under pressure was the Union of Ukrainians of Russia (UUR), the central coordinating organization for the Ukrainian national minority in Russia, established in 1992 and registered with the Ministry of Justice in 1994.

Oleksandr Alfyorov

Oleksandr Alfyorov, a historian and currently an officer of the 3rd Separate Assault Brigade, believes that the reason for the searches, criminal proceedings, and the official closure of the UUR in 2012 was Russia’s invasion of Georgia: “2008. At that time, Georgia’s political support led to such a warning against Ukrainians. And this warning came from the Kremlin.”

Askold Lozynsky

Askold Lozynsky cites another argument: the loud commemoration of the Holodomor anniversary by Ukrainians in Russia in 2008 demonstrated to the Russian authorities the attitude of Ukrainians: “Moscow began to persecute Ukrainians for commemorating the Holodomor, and then began to close all representative offices in 2010 when Yanukovich came to power, because they knew that Yanukovich would not protect Ukrainians.”

Since 2012, cultural centers have been under pressure, including this iconic institution, and the last of a series of closures, the Ukrainian library in Moscow, which was finally liquidated by the authorities in 2017, after the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of part of the Ukrainian East.

The Ukrainian authorities reacted to these closures with a very sluggish response, limiting themselves to official statements. As a result, the Ukrainian community in Russia became “invisible” to both the global Ukrainian community and the mother country. As Askold Lozynski notes, “Putin began to eliminate Ukrainian central representations. In addition, in 2016, the World Congress of Ukrainians was added to the list of undesirable organizations in Russia. Organizations that still remained in Russia had to retreat from the World Congress. But the World Congress lost interest in them as well. Thus, Ukrainians in Russia lost their voice in international diaspora organizations.”

Vitaliy Portnikov

Vitaliy Portnikov, a journalist and publicist, Shevchenko Prize winner, has been living in Russia for a long time and contributing to the creation of Ukrainian communities. Recently, he predicted a fatalistic outcome for both national diasporas of the neighboring peoples, Russian and Ukrainian, saying that if the war continues, they will finally disappear: “The history of coexistence between the two neighboring peoples, who had multimillion-dollar diasporas in the territories of Ukraine and Russia, is coming to an end before our eyes. And all we can do is to preserve the historical memory of the lands where Ukrainians once lived and their unique civilization on these lands, from the Green Wedge to the Kuban. But we are unlikely to ever meet 'living' Ukrainians on these lands.”

Instead, Askold Lozynski is convinced that Ukrainians in Russia not only exist, but are still waiting for Ukrainian support: “They themselves want contact. They are desperate for contact. I have a concept that there was a lot of migration in Ukraine during the war. So Ukraine should open its doors, but very carefully, to Ukrainians who are from Russia. And to make it possible for them to renounce their Russian citizenship and take Ukrainian citizenship in some time.”

The issue of security of existence for those in Russia who are still convinced Ukrainians is one of the reasons why, according to Aleksandr Alfeyorov, the Ukrainian authorities have not been very insistent on returning rights to Ukrainian communities: “I know that Ukrainian activists in Russia have been persecuted, and any support from Ukraine only added to their imprisonment or more fines. We also remember the introduction of the rules on foreign agents in relation to NGOs and public figures. And it’s clear that no one was willing to endanger them. To be honest, in 2014, I did not see any attempts to really expand the activities of Ukrainian organizations in Russia because of the very beginning of Russia's war with Ukraine. We understand that there are security issues, especially with regard to those who joined the Ukrainian underground. They are a minority, we do not hear their voice, but they are there.”

What do we have now?

The level of visibility of Ukrainians in Russia, the importance of this diaspora, began to fade in 2008, and this happened because of Russian policy. The number of people who identified themselves as Ukrainians fell by one million from the 2002 census to 2010. With the outbreak of war in 2014, and the full-scale invasion, there was certainly no incentive for ethnic Ukrainians to

identify themselves as Ukrainians, even if they had a national identity. As Lozynsky notes: “Really, what good would it do them if they said in the census that I was Ukrainian?”

Alferov, like Lozynsky and Portnikov, notes that there is not a single representative organization of Ukrainians in Russia today. “In Russia, there is not a single school where Ukrainian is taught, there is not a single publication, and there is not a single organization, library, or club where Ukrainians could gather at all. Everything was eliminated by the beginning of 2014,” emphasizes Aleksandr Alforyov.

Meanwhile, Askold Lozynski continues to communicate with the diaspora. Those of them who still remained in Russia with openly Ukrainian views are now leaving the country out of fear for their lives: “I talk to them every few days. For example, there is Valeriy Semenenko, the head of Ukrainians in Moscow, who arrived in Kyiv only 3-4 months ago. They were constantly coming to his house and searching it. The second is Mykhailo Volyk, who was active in St. Petersburg [now he has left for Yerevan because of pressure from Russian punitive authorities]. Serhiy Vynnyk, the head of a local organization, left for Canada from the Omsk region. There are many Ukrainians with whom I am in contact, and many of them have left. They have no future in Russia.”

Most of them, since they have Russian citizenship and the border between the two countries is closed, were forced to go to Ukraine through third countries, such as Armenia and Kazakhstan. The question raised by Lozynsky about the cautious but return of Ukrainians who want to leave Russia should also be raised. But so far it is not on the agenda.

A decree that was 15 years overdue

Whatever the reasons, whether it was Yanukovych’s pro-Russian views or security issues under Poroshenko, there has not been a single official document since 2009 that would regulate, support, or signal to Ukrainians in Russia that they have not been forgotten. That is why Zelensky’s decree on the historically Ukrainian-inhabited territories of the Russian Federation was welcomed by all those who are involved in and interested in Russian-Ukrainian relations. Oleksandr Alforyov, a scholar who has studied the history of these lands, explains certain accents: “This is a unique decree that I absolutely support. In fact, it challenges the Russian system, which on international platforms says that someone in Ukraine allegedly harassed someone for the Russian language or the Russian church, and instead came to Ukraine with weapons and brought genocide. We will also be able to demonstrate on world platforms that this war is not only unfair and unjustified, but it is a continuation of the conflict that the Russian state started in 1917.

Lawyer Askold Lozynsky also has positive expectations, in particular, regarding the moral support of Ukrainians in Russia: “I called Volik and told him about this decree. And he said: Amen, it has finally happened. Yes, Ukrainians there understand that the decree will not be of much importance for their protection, because Russia is not governed by laws. But it is important to them that finally their mother country is interested in them and cares about them. And I can tell you that this will be a calling for them. Not to create a revolution in Russia, but to leave, escape and go to Ukraine. And the law is very much needed. It’s 15 years overdue, but it’s good,

at least now. Volodymyr Zelensky is the only president who is interested in the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia, and this is important.”

So what about the Green Wedge?

One of the questions that remains on the mind is why the decree does not mention the territories of the so-called Green Wedge inhabited by Ukrainians. For example, Askold Lozynsky doubts that without the Green Wedge we can talk about the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia. Moreover, it was also affected by the processes of denationalization and even persecution of Ukrainians.

Alfyorov explains the absence of territories separated from Ukraine by thousands of kilometers in the document as being aimed at an international audience, which he says may raise certain questions for the Ukrainian side: “The Decree is aimed at the external diplomatic community. If we had mentioned other Ukrainian ethnic territories scattered across the Russian Federation, we would have defocused attention on Ukrainian ethnic lands located along the Ukrainian border in the Russian Federation.” The historian notes that focusing on the border areas allowed them to speak clearly, without claiming “any islands in the Russian Federation, which would have allowed Russian propaganda to start saying that, well, you see, ‘Ukrainians dug up the Black Sea and settled Kamchatka.’ This is the right decision to deliver the right message to Western diplomats.”

Even without identifying all Russian territories inhabited by Ukrainians, the Decree gave impetus to scholars and researchers to work on the concept of Ukrainianness as a concept not limited to the territory of Ukraine. To study the methods by which the Russian ideological machine destroys the Ukrainian ethnic minority in its country. And to look for mechanisms to help those who are waiting for Ukrainian support. Even if there are no longer a million of them, every Ukrainian person is important to us. Especially during the war.

Yaryna Skurativska, Kyiv

15. Russia. “Kuban, Starodubshchyna, Slobozhanshchyna: Zelenskyy Names Territories in Russia ‘Historically Inhabited’ by Ukrainians,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, 22 January 2024.

By Olena Roshchina

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has instructed the government to develop a plan for preserving the national identity of Ukrainians in Russia who live in the “historically inhabited lands” in what are now the Krasnodar Krai, Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, Kursk, and Rostov oblasts of the Russian Federation.

Source: Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Russian territories historically inhabited by Ukrainians” (No. 17/2024 dated 22 January 2024).

Quote: “The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine is to develop, with the involvement of international experts, representatives of the Ukrainian World Congress, scholars, and the public, and submit

for consideration by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine a plan for preserving the national identity of Ukrainians in the Russian Federation, including in lands historically inhabited by them (in Kuban, Starodubshchyna, Northern and Eastern Slobozhanshchyna within the boundaries of the present-day Krasnodar Krai, Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, Kursk, and Rostov oblasts of the Russian Federation).”

Details: This plan is to include, in particular:

- * addressing the issue of collecting and studying facts and evidence of crimes committed against Ukrainians residing (or previously residing) in the territories of Russia, historically inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians, regarding policies of forced Russification, political repression, and deportations against Ukrainians, restoration and preservation of historical memory, including the establishment of a centre on these matters;
- * intensifying efforts to counter disinformation and propaganda by the Russian Federation concerning the history and the current situation of Ukrainians in Russia and all the nations enslaved by it, involving domestic and foreign scholars, experts, and representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora in the preparation and implementation of events aimed at debunking Russian myths about Ukraine;
- * developing cooperation between Ukrainians and nations oppressed by Russia;
- * ensuring, in collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the preparation and dissemination of materials in Ukraine and globally on the more than thousand-year history of Ukrainian statehood, historical ties to lands populated by ethnic Ukrainians, and Ukrainian national state entities in different historical periods;
- * incorporating the true history of ethnic Ukrainians in lands historically inhabited by them within the Russian Federation into educational curricula and textbooks for educational institutions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine must consider the provisions of this decree when developing a comprehensive strategy for Ukraine's interaction with the global Ukrainian community.

Zelenskyy is justifying his decree by stating that “Russia has systematically been engaged in and continues to engage in actions aimed at the destruction of national identity, oppression of Ukrainians, violation of their rights and freedoms, including in the lands historically inhabited by them of Kuban, Starodubshchyna, Northern and Eastern Slobozhanshchyna within the boundaries of the present-day Krasnodar Krai, Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, Kursk, and Rostov oblasts of the Russian Federation.”

He emphasises the necessity for Russia to adhere to its international obligations by ensuring the rights of Ukrainians residing on its territories, including those historically inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians. This includes the right to receive education in the Ukrainian language and its free use, as well as civil, social, cultural, and religious rights, access to Ukrainian-language media, and the right to peaceful assembly.

Background:

- * President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his greetings on Ukraine's Unity Day in 2024 that he had signed a decree On the Territories of the Russian Federation Historically Inhabited by

Ukrainians.

* The Russian government, led by Vladimir Putin, explains the war against Ukraine as a “defence” of Russian-speaking people on “original Russian lands” and claims that it is supposedly fighting NATO on Ukrainian territory.

* Dmitry Medvedev, former Russian President and current Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council, recently stated: “The existence of an independent state on historically Russian territories will now be a constant pretext for the resumption of combat actions.”

16. Serbia. “Olena Zelenska Meets with Ukrainian Diaspora in Belgrade, Launches Ukrainian Audio Guide in Kalemegdan Fortress,” *En.interfax.com.ua*, 13 May 2024.

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KYIV. May 13 (Interfax-Ukraine) – First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska is in Belgrade at the invitation of First Lady of Serbia Tamara Vucic to participate in a conference on mental health and devoted the first day of the visit to cultural diplomacy events.

As reported on the website of the head of the Ukrainian state, together with the first lady of Serbia, foreign ministers of the two countries Dmytro Kuleba and Marko Djuric, she took part in the opening of the Ukrainian bookshelf in the Belgrade library. The project has more than 200 shelves and 50,000 Ukrainian books in 47 countries. “I believe in a civilized dialogue of cultures. Now this, as well as joint humanitarian projects, continues to increase mutual understanding between Ukraine and Serbia,” Zelenska noted.

The first ladies also took part in the launch of a Ukrainian audio guide at the Kalemegdan fortress in the center of Belgrade as part of Olena Zelenska’s project to spread the Ukrainian language in attractions around the world. “This is already the 84th such guide of the project on the Ukrainianization of the world’s leading monuments. I am glad that now this ancient place with a heroic history will be able to tell about itself in Ukrainian,” Zelenska said.

On the same day, the First Lady and Foreign Ministers attended the signing of an agreement on research, education and cultural cooperation between the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and the University of Belgrade, which have been collaborating for almost 30 years. The new agreement provides for the opening of scientific and educational centers for the study of the history and culture of both countries.

The president’s wife also held a meeting with representatives of the Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Rusyn communities. “We in Ukraine know well and appreciate the active work of representatives of the Ukrainian community in Serbia. You are the bridge that connects Ukraine and Serbia, who represents Ukraine to the Serbs every day. All your deeds are important: from training to volunteering, because it strengthens us all,” Zelenska emphasized.

17. United Kingdom/Canada. “Animation and the Shock of War: Siblings Mariia and Rodion Shub Discuss Life, Art, and the Ukrainian Diaspora,” *Cartoonbrew.com*, 22 February 2024.

By Jamie Lang

It has been nearly two since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, forcing countless people to flee their native land.

Mariia Shub is a Ukrainian artist and animator who was displaced to the U.K. by violence in her home country. She has served as an art director and production designer on several Ukrainian features and shorts, and in 2022, she made the animated short *Little Wings* with her brother, Rodion Shub, which went on to earn a nomination at the Ukrainian Golden Dzyga Film Awards. Rodion, a producer and director, was displaced to Canada, 3,200 miles from his sister. He has animated sequences in several features, including *Human with a Stool*, *It's Just Space*, and *Tales of a Toy Horse*. His studio, Ridni, recently put out a showreel, linked below.

The siblings are members of Screencraft Works, a non-profit organization that supports marginalized production and post-production workers to develop their careers in new communities. Screencraft Works co-director Elizabeth McIntyre recently met with the two to discuss how the war in their home country has affected them professionally, creatively, and personally. McIntyre has shared the details of their meeting with *Cartoon Brew*. A full transcript of the conversation is available here as a pdf [<https://screencraftworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Animation-and-the-Shock-of-War.pdf>].

Finding A Cultural Identity

According to the Shubs, Ukraine's ability to express its cultural identity through contemporary media is a modern invention, as the shadow cast by the Soviet Union persisted for years after the end of that era. Rodion says that only about 20 years ago, Ukrainians started to recognize their identity and reflect that on stage, screen, and radio:

This began to happen in 2004 when I was still in school. And this continues to the present day. Throughout my life, I have witnessed the flourishing of Ukrainian culture, with the emergence of wonderful, diverse music in various genres, intriguing and powerful movies and documentary films, diverse festivals, and cultural events.

In 2017, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF) was established, and over its five years of existence, it has supported numerous films, albums, festivals, and educational initiatives. "As an artist, I have benefited from this, receiving funding to contribute to various screen and educational projects," says Rodion.

Artwork As A Means Of Expression

According to Mariia, her artwork has provided a way to express the shock of war. As she moved from place to place on her way to eventually settling in the U.K., she found solace in the act of creation:

I started to draw straight away after we arrived in Germany. I left many of my pictures over there in the houses of my friends. I also started to create mosaics. I was compelled to realize my shock of war in mosaics. I chose a big wall in a garden near the house of my German friends. We bought little pebbles from garden shops and super-cheap baubles in different colors. In white or yellow and black, and I started

to make a huge mosaic in a garden. My telephone was on 24 hours a day to communicate with friends, check on my parents, and hear the news. So I just put my telephone near me and started to create my mosaic. I worked every day for two months, and it really helped me to avoid going crazy.

Conflict's Effect On Creativity

Although her work allowed Mariia to focus on something beyond the events happening back in Ukraine, even if only for moments at a time, her creative process was unquestionably altered by them:

It's difficult to describe how the pressures of war affected my creativity. At first, I wanted to stay firm and not change my style. I didn't want to paint darkness or pain or show the turmoil of feelings I was feeling. So I tried – and still try – to paint very bright flowers on my canvases. The colors, in fact, became even brighter as the pressures of war increased – bolder and brighter.

Finding New Communities Through Animation

Rodion says that putting down roots in a new country has been a shocking experience but that the artistic community in Montreal has made the transition far easier than it could have been:

Quite quickly, I found new friends here, a community, and work. I have continued my career as a teacher here. I share my love of and passion for stop motion with children in schools. I had been teaching stop motion to children for 10 years in Ukraine, balancing my professional life between teaching and the production of commercial content, but here in Montreal, I have more teaching work.

During my time settling in Canada, I have had two projects as a director, one for the U.K. and one for Ukraine – but not yet for the Canadian market, which I would welcome. It was a joy to feel so alive again during my remote director work recently. I really miss my professional life as a director and yearn to do more again in this field.

Cross-Border Collaboration

In 2022, the siblings created the animated short *Little Wings* together, earning a Ukrainian Academy Award nomination. The short was commissioned by London-based digital design and communications agency AKQA to mark the 100th anniversary of the Ukrainian Christmas carol “Carol of the Bells.” Mariia worked on the short from London while Rodion worked in Montreal. Mariia explained the process, saying:

I drew everything separately on watercolor paper, and then Rodion cut the pictures out digitally and animated them in Adobe After Effects. It was a combination between the real texture of watercolor paper and animation. We had just three weeks, so we combined our skill sets and tools: I made the flat watercolors, deliberately leaving the lines in a handcrafted style – all the characters were drawn separately.

Rodion added that throughout production, the two discovered new tools and methods that made remote working easier over time:

Mariia made some extra elements on the iPad in Procreate, including the animation of the shooting star.

When I assembled everything and gave the pictures back to Mariia, she was not satisfied. Mariia's a perfectionist, always ensuring her very best work. So, we found a new tool. I gave her back a .psd with all the layers already assembled; in this way, she was then able to add the occasional extra shadow where effective to do so, overdrawing; she basically could retouch it in a digital way, which was a new experience for her as she is not trained as a digital artist, yet she is able to adapt to new technologies and always rises to new challenges, as do I.

For those interested in learning more about cross-border collaboration, we recommend this Screencraft video from last October [at: <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/interviews/animation-and-the-shock-of-war-siblings-mariia-and-rodion-shub-discuss-life-art-and-the-ukrainian-diaspora-238322.html>], which features the Shubs and other artists who have, for various reasons, been forced to collaborate across great distances.

18. United Kingdom. "Volunteer Who Quit Job to Help Ukrainians Living in Scotland Honoured," *Independent Online*, 14 June 2024.

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By Sarah Ward

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, 63, works with Edinburgh's Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain.

A volunteer who gave up her job to help the humanitarian response to the invasion of Ukraine has been recognised in the King's Birthday Honours.

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, 63, has been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to the Ukrainian community in Scotland.

Mrs Beaton-Hawryluk, who lives in South Queensferry, near Edinburgh, took time off from work when the fighting broke out and she became Holova (chairwoman) of Edinburgh's Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) nine days after Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion.

She later told her boss at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh that she would not be going back, and for the past two-and-a-half years she has dedicated her life to helping with the humanitarian efforts in Edinburgh and raised £5.5 million.

Mrs Beaton-Hawryluk, whose father was Ukrainian, is now working to ensure that displaced Ukrainian children are able to continue speaking their mother tongue, having an awareness of how easily the language can be lost with integration, as she never learnt the language.

Her father was forced to settle in Scotland after the Second World War, and she told how she hopes he would be proud of her.

She joined AUGB in 2004 to celebrate her heritage and said that pre-war, the Ukrainian Community Centre was holding around two events per month. It is now helping 500 people a

week and has doubled its membership.

In the first three weeks, a collection point amassed around 200 boxes of aid and had more than 200 volunteers – and a weekly programme of activities was set up for the Ukrainian diaspora, including those living on a cruise ship in Leith docks.

Mother-of-three Mrs Beaton-Hawryluk said: “I’m just grateful I was able to give up my job. People who come here are so grateful for what they have been given – they arrived with nothing. My problems seem small in comparison.”

She said the community centre allows refugees living in hotels to cook and to speak their language so it does not get “diluted” from being in the UK.

Mrs Beaton-Hawryluk said: “Children are losing their Ukrainian – if that happens then Putin has won.”

The organisation has expanded from being voluntary to having paid staff, and the City of Edinburgh Council provided funding for a warehouse for aid.

Mrs Beaton-Hawryluk added: “I hope it’s what my dad would have wanted.”

19. United Kingdom. “Record Cafe Talk Looks at Impact of War on Ukrainian Football,” *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, 5 April 2024.

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By Emma Clayton

UKRAINIAN football and the war is the subject of Saturday’s Sporting Lunchtime Lecture at the Record Cafe on North Parade, Bradford.

As the war in the Ukraine enters its second year, April’s sporting lunchtime lecture, at noon, is entitled ‘The Game Goes On’. It will be given by Peter Chymera, a member of the Uki Bantams group.

Organiser David Pendleton said: “Following the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, football was at the back of everyone’s mind. However following the strong resistance of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the general population, football simply had to continue. The Game Goes On will focus on the impact of the invasion on the beautiful game, and how football offers hope and an international rallying point for Ukraine.

Peter will talk about how football in the country has adapted to wartime conditions, from the national team’s morale boosting efforts on the field to supporters groups on the frontline.

The Uki Bantams is a group of Ukrainian diaspora Bradford City fans - second, third and fourth generation Ukrainians, as well as those who’ve arrived here seeking sanctuary. The Uki Bantams go to games and are involved in community activities.

During the talk there will be a collection for the foundation Stands of Heroes supporting families of fallen football fans from Ukraine.

Often in dark times, sport can become a beacon of hope and as an act of defiance.”

* The Sporting Lunchtime Lecture is at the Record Cafe, North Parade, on Saturday, April 6 at 12noon.

20. USA. “Preservation of Ukrainian Diaspora Continues through Manor College’s Project Resilience,” *Manor.edu*, 10 June 2024.

Hundreds of boxes have been sorted and preserved since the program’s founding in 2021.

At the advent of the latest war in Ukraine, Manor College created Project Resilience.

Project Resilience acquires and digitizes materials of significant historical and cultural value to the Ukrainian Diaspora – the spread of a people from their original homeland. This effort creates global access to preserve, enrich and inspire future generations.

More than two years since its inception, efforts continue to record thousands of records.

“The greatest generation of Ukrainian immigrants is aging,” Nicholas Rudnytzky, Dean of Academic Services at Manor College, said. “Libraries, and the cultural institutions this generation founded, are not finding a home with their successors. They are in danger of being lost. Project Resilience came into being to preserve these archives.”

The first boxes came from the late Dr. Alexander Lushnycky. He served as a member of the Ukrainian Advisory Council and was a dedicated historian of the Ukrainian Diaspora.

Over time, hundreds of boxes ranging from journals and newspapers to microfilm were brought to Manor College’s library. George Danyliw, a local volunteer, performed a “first pass” on every item, categorizing and indexing the items to “give order to chaos.” The boxes, once stacked and spread out in a third of Manor’s library, now are organized and sorted as the project continues in a small room in the library.

Thanks to the support of Mary Lushnycky, Dr. Lushnycky’s wife, Manor College hired a librarian assistant to continue indexing and digitizing the entire collection.

A library assistant has cataloged and packaged a large portion of almanacs dating back to 1892. Tables of content were copied and photographed to make the information accessible to researchers.

With almanacs nearly completed, the assistant turned her attention to journals from Ukrainian life and arts, the political scene and religious issues.

Currently, Manor College is searching for funding for a proper book scanner that would allow the institution to more efficiently process and digitize the thousands of publications in its possession.

“This is a massive undertaking, but one that’s incredibly necessary,” Rudnytzky said. “With the destruction of Ukraine on the part of Moscow and the destruction of Ukraine’s cultural treasures, it is more important now more than ever to preserve what we have.”

21. USA. “Ukrainian Diaspora in US Rally to Support Azovstal Defenders,” *Kyiv Post*, 31 May 2024.

By David Kirichenko

Had the defenders of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol not pinned the Russians down for nearly three months, much of eastern Ukraine would have been overrun. Many are still in captivity.

Dozens of people joined a rally in Seattle, Washington, on May 19 to raise awareness for the plight of Ukrainian soldiers still held in Russian captivity. May marked the second anniversary of the defense of Mariupol, where thousands of Ukrainian soldiers were taken prisoner after the siege of the city ended on May 20, 2022. The rally in Seattle was part of a wider chain of protests organized around the US which were intended to raise awareness for the 1,900 soldiers still in Russian captivity.

The soldiers who fought till the end in Mariupol were hailed as heroes by the Ukrainian government. Drawing Russian forces into a prolonged siege of the city and later the Azovstal steelworks, forced Russia to expend more resources and manpower, preventing them from deploying those soldiers and resources to other areas of the front. Ukraine’s General Staff of the Armed Forces stated, “We gained critically needed time to build up our reserves, regroup our forces and get help from our partners.”

The Ukrainian soldiers who led the defense of Mariupol ended up changing the trajectory of the war. As a result, the soldiers from Azov were subjected to the most brutal torture endured by Ukrainian prisoners of war. Norman, a drone unit commander from the 109th Separate Territorial Defense Brigade, commented on the captivity of Azovstal soldiers: “This is the scariest and worst scenario, to end up being captured. The fate of those who are there and those who wait for them is very hard.”

The Seattle rally was organized by two local activists, Lina Ngo and Anton Yefremov. Lina is a Ukrainian refugee of Vietnamese descent, and Anton Yefremov is a Ukrainian-American and is the Vice President of Ukraine Defense Support. Both have said they have friends who are fighting on the frontlines and rally supporters of Ukraine through Ukraine Defense Support to raise funds to buy supplies such as drones and night vision equipment for the soldiers.

Speaking about the motivation of organizing the rally, Lina said “The support from activists and local organizations remains strong, but we still need more constant involvement from people.

The longer the war goes on, the louder and more actively we need to speak out about it.”

“We stay involved because it’s not a choice – it’s a responsibility that we must carry,”

She further commented, “While some people remain active, overall engagement has decreased because the war has entered a new stage, and media coverage has lessened.” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky himself previously stated, “Attention equals help. No attention will mean no help. We fight for every bit of attention.”

Anton said that he stays motivated to continue the fight and continue organizing rallies because the Ukrainian diaspora is the backbone of support for the Ukrainian soldiers abroad. “We stay involved because it’s not a choice – it’s a responsibility that we must carry,” he noted. The official account of the Association of Families of Azovstal Defenders also reposted a social media post about the rally in Seattle.

Andrij Dobriansky, communications director for the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, also commented on the Seattle protest: “Since the war against Ukraine began in 2014, Ukrainians outside of Ukraine have communicated regularly with family and local community members serving in Ukraine’s Armed Forces. These personal connections remain the backbone of support between diaspora organizations and those manning the front lines.”

The rally in Seattle began with the organizers gathering individuals at the Space Needle, Seattle’s prominent city icon. The group built a makeshift cage out of cardboard to illustrate to the public how the Mariupol defenders are still being held prisoners. There were also flyers printed that provided details of the defenders and the need to raise awareness for their plight.

Following the gathering at the Space Needle, the group moved to the Seattle Center, holding banners with messages in support of the Azovstal defenders. The organizers provided information flyers for other rally attendees to hand out to passersby.

Lina then began shouting chants such as “free Azovstal defenders,” “arm Ukraine” and “Russia is a terrorist state” with the group repeating these chants to gain the attention of people nearby. Some cars drove by honking, others waved at the protestors. Lina, with a never-ending amount of energy, traversed the street, back and forth, leading the chants.

Valeria Biletska, whose son fought at Azovstal and is still in Russian captivity, attended the rally. The Biletska family is originally from Kherson and Valeria immigrated to the Seattle area shortly after Russia’s full-scale invasion. Once Lina told the group that Valeria was in attendance at the rally and that her son was still in captivity, Valeria couldn’t hold back her tears. Members of the rally quickly gathered around her to offer their sympathies and exchange hugs to offer support.

Valeria is also an artist and has donated numerous pieces of her art (Petrykivka) for auctions to buy equipment for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Valeria mentioned that she had shared pictures from the rally with other families waiting for their loved ones to be released from Russian captivity.

David Kirichenko is a freelance journalist covering Eastern Europe. He can be found on the social media platform X @DVKirichenko.

22. USA. “Veselka: The Rainbow Ukraine Feeds New York,” *Kyiv Post*, 23 February 2024.

By Regina Filonenko

Set in Manhattan’s hippest neighborhood, this Ukrainian coffee shop with humble origins has seduced refugees, artists and Hollywood stars alike. Now it’s starring in its own film.

Shortly after Russia launched its full-scale war on Ukraine, the Veselka restaurant in New York City decided to donate the proceeds of every bowl of borsht sold to the Ukrainian war effort.

The move was a success – even though Veselka (which means “rainbow” in Ukrainian) was successful even before the war.

For a solid 70 years, the Veselka restaurant in Manhattan has held something like a legendary status, offering New Yorkers and tourists, as well as Ukrainian diaspora, an authentic taste of Ukraine. Every day, 3,000 varenyky (handmade dumplings), are prepared there, along with potato pancakes and of course, massive pots of borsht.

It started as a newsstand and candy shop near the corner of East 9th St. and 2nd Ave. on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Bought in 1954 by Volodymyr and Olha Darmochwal, refugees from Ukraine who came to the United States after World War II, the newsstand catered to the Ukrainian community that was flocking into the neighborhood in those years, eventually acquiring the nickname “Little Ukraine.”

Over the years, the Darmochwals bought the adjacent luncheonette and began serving traditional Eastern European fare. The neighborhood had always been a magnet for immigrants, but in the 1950s it began attracting bohemian artists and the Beat generation. Poet Allen Ginsberg was a frequent customer after poetry readings at the legendary St. Mark’s Poetry Project two blocks away.

In the 1960s and ‘70s the hippies came, often after a show at the Filmore East on 2nd Ave. between 6th and 7th Street, and continued where the Beats left off. By the 1980s, when it was open 24/7 the coffee shop was almost a second office for punk stars like Debbie Harry (aka Blondie) and the Ramones, who would come for a meal after late-night gigs at CBGBs a few blocks away on the Bowery.

By the time Veselka celebrated its 50th anniversary, it was an established institution – arguably the hippest old-school diner in the hippest neighborhood of America’s hippest city.
Advertisement

Today Veselka is still a family-run business. Since 2020, it’s been owned by Darmochwal’s son-in-law, Tom Birchard, who began working at Veselka in 1967, and run by the founders’ grandson, Jason Birchard. The founders’ son, Mykola Darmochwal, maintains a role as a

consultant.

The story of Veselka will now be told and show in a documentary film “Veselka: Rainbow at the Center of the World,” directed by Michael Fiore.

The History

The owner of the restaurant is Tom Birchard. His wife, Marta, was the daughter of Veselka’s founder, the Ukrainian patriot Volodymyr Darmochwal. Together with his wife Olha, they emigrated to the United States from Lviv after World War II and in 1954, the couple founded Veselka.

In 2018, Birchard told Kyiv Post that Volodymyr started modestly, purchasing a tiny shop selling newspapers and candies. The shop also offered hot and cold drinks and snacks. However, as adjacent spaces became available, Volodymyr acquired them, allowing customers to eat at a counter. As the space grew, he added more tables and expanded his menu to include full meals – breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. These were authentic Ukrainian dishes like borsht, varenyky, potato pancakes, and sweet crepe-type pancakes.”

“My father-in-law was a very patriotic man who supported many of the community organizations working for Ukrainian independence and to keep Ukrainian identity alive,” Birchard said.

“We still serve the same dishes. Over the years, the recipes haven’t changed.”

In an interview with Voice of America, Tom Birchard said that over all these years, they managed to maintain the establishment’s national character: “Some people who don’t know our history think I’m Ukrainian. And frankly, I’m proud of that.”

From a simple kiosk to hollywood movie set and celeb hotspot

In 1980, American national media visited this restaurant for the first time – The Village Voice provided readers with a debut review of Veselka.

During those years, the restaurant’s reputation continued to strengthen.

Veselka frequently appeared in well-known films, such as “Ocean’s 8,” the TV series “Blue Bloods,” the movie “Trust the Man” featuring Julianne Moore and Maggie Gyllenhaal, and the series “Gossip Girl.”

Veselka also attracts plenty of famous faces like movie star Robert De Niro, James Bond actor Daniel Craig, and his wife Rachel Weisz, as well as TV personalities like Jon Stewart.

“Some restaurants take photos of famous customers and put them on the walls,” Jason Birchard told Kyiv Post. “But we don’t disturb them and tell our staff to treat them as ordinary customers. They appreciate that and return.”

In 2020, the American magazine Esquire included the Ukrainian restaurant Veselka on the list of “100 Restaurants America Can’t Afford to Lose.”

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Veselka began helping the country. The restaurant’s website includes a section called “Stand with Ukraine,” highlighting its commitment to supporting Ukrainians. It has already managed to raise \$500,000.

“When we started our campaign to help relief efforts in Ukraine, it was beyond our wildest imaginations that we would be able to donate half a million dollars. We would not have been able to do that without you. While we have come so far to help Ukraine, we will continue to make donations through our donation bundles and sales of the SaveUkraine Bowl,” as stated on the restaurant’s website.

“Veselka: The Rainbow on the Corner at the Center of the World.”

Last year, in the United States, a documentary was produced about Veselka and how it mobilized aid to Ukraine. It premieres on Feb. 23, 2024, just in time for the two-year commemoration of the full-scale invasion.

The narrator is Golden Globe-winning and Emmy-nominated actor David Duchovny. He grew up within shouting distance of the restaurant. Duchovny even has Ukrainian roots: his grandfather was from the Zhytomyr region but later immigrated to the US. “I’m grateful for the very meaningful opportunity to lend my voice to a place and a part of the city that’s a big part of my childhood, history, and heritage,” he told the entertainment news outlet Deadline.

The film is directed by New York-based writer-producer-director Michael Fiore, who first became acquainted with Veselka in the late 1990s as a film student at the neighboring NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

“For 70 years, Veselka has been a second kitchen for New York University students, including myself. It has been the vibrant and welcoming heart of the Little Ukraine community and beyond. Today, Veselka’s role, and Tom and Jason Birchard’s, are more vital than ever,” Fiore told Deadline.

The soundtrack for the film was composed by Ryan Shore, with Grammy-winning saxophonist David Sanborn also part of the musical team.

“I’m so grateful to be asked to participate in this extraordinary documentary about a New York institution, Veselka the legendary Ukrainian restaurant and cultural hub on the lower east side of Manhattan. Now more than ever!” Sanborn said.

“In assembling my creative team,” Fiore said, “it was so important to involve people who love and have experienced both Veselka and the culture of New York City’s Little Ukraine.”

Regina Filonenko is an editor. She has been working in journalism since 2014. Before joining the Kyiv Post team, she worked for Ukrainian TV channels. She believes that access to objective and reliable information is crucial for sustaining democracy worldwide.

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