



Pedagogická  
fakulta  
Faculty  
of Education

Jihočeská univerzita  
v Českých Budějovicích  
University of South Bohemia  
in České Budějovice

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích  
Pedagogická fakulta  
Katedra

Bachelor's thesis

# Ukrainian Migration and Integration in the Czech Republic in the pre-and post-Maidan Era: Immigrant vs Refugee

Conducted: František Kadlec  
Thesis supervisor: PhDr. Salim Murad, Ph.D.

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*Prohlašuji, že svoji bakalářskou disertační práci jsem vypracoval samostatně pouze s použitím pramenů a literatury uvedených v seznamu citované literatury.*

*I declare that I developed my bachelor's dissertation independently using only the sources and literature listed in the list of cited literature.*

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*My heart goes out to all the victims of the unprovoked full-on invasion by Russia of Ukraine. You are the real heroes.*

*And a huge thank you to my loving grandmother Maria who recently passed away, may your soul rest in peace.*

*"Only the dead have seen the end of the war." — George Santayana, 1922*

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The research was carried out using collecting empirical data showcasing the arrivals of migrants in certain periods and their experiences, and in-depth interviews with migrants and refugees. The research sample consists of three different groups of people from different



eras. I have also compared the data and stories to understand the differences between the periods.

## **ANNOTATION**

Ukrainian migration has been a topic under the spotlight, especially in the past few years. The almost unwanted attention to the increasing migration wave was brought mainly by the military conflict created by Russia resulting in hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Ukraine mainly to central Europe. Ukrainian migration is however not a topic of 21st century. I feel as if the public does not fully grasp the crucial difference between a migrant and a refugee. The terms are for the majority and media are often easily interchangeable. The two have however very different experiences. Starting from the initial decision to leave the country, ending with integration and even the idea of belonging. Migrant identities and refugee identities are formed very differently. During my research, I have found that literature regarding the differences between the two is not very common or popular and the media coverage is almost non-existent. Apart from a few NGOs that give somewhat of a guide as to how to have a “first encounter with a refugee and a migrant” there seems to be almost no emphasis on the topic. , Further, it is important to mention that the migrants and refugees themselves see the difference and can feel this gap of understanding between both groups. Ukrainian communities that have already formed in the Czech Republic over the years have very little in common with refugees from Ukraine when it comes to their personal experiences and although it may seem that refugees would gravitate towards the Ukrainian-speaking minority in the Czech Republic, it is not always the case. The thesis aims to analyze the challenges but also the help that Ukrainian immigrants and refugees receive upon their arrival to the Czech Republic. The thesis also focuses on explaining the shift in migration related to historical and current events in Ukraine and focuses on comparing the experiences of immigrants to the ones of refugees. The thesis will cover two migration periods. The first one in the late 1990s focused on monetary reform as a push factor for leaving the country. This part focuses primarily on the struggles of everyday Ukrainian citizens with the economic crisis mainly focusing on the Bukovina region as that was the home region of the participants in my research. The reason for the focus on the Bukovina region was also caused by the common history with the Czech Republic and also my familiarity with the area as that is



where I spent over half of my life growing up. The second part covers the refugee crisis caused by the unprovoked invasion by Russia to Ukraine. The overall underline of the whole thesis will be the distinction between the migration and integration of refugees and migrants. My research showed me clear differences between the experiences of migrants and refugees. It also showed how migrants experience watching Ukraine go through difficult changes over time from abroad. This feeling often described as helplessness was a common nominator to the refugees spending the rest of their lives abroad. The feeling of belonging to the Czech society comes however to them more often than the feeling of belonging to the Ukrainian one. Feeling "Ukrainian" would often be triggered by events in Ukraine that sort of call for unity i.e. elections, sports tournaments, protests, and war. The aim of concluding the thesis is to provide the context behind the words "migrant" and "refugee". Often than not people seem to forget that a refugee is someone that has left their life behind and then have an expression of surprise on their face when a refugee is just a normal person with an expensive car, instead a child in ripped clothes and bullet holes in their backpack.

### **Anotace**

Ukrajinská migrace je tématem, které je v centru pozornosti zejména v posledních několika letech. Téměř nechtěnou pozornost vzrůstající migrační vlně přinesl především vojenský konflikt vyvolaný Ruskem, v jehož důsledku z Ukrajiny prchají statisíce uprchlíků především do střední Evropy. Ukrajinská migrace však není tématem pouze 21. století. Mám pocit, jako by veřejnost ne zcela chápala zásadní rozdíl mezi migrantem a uprchlíkem. Tyto pojmy jsou pro většinu a média často snadno zaměnitelné. Oba však mají velmi odlišné zkušenosti. Počínaje počátečním rozhodnutím opustit zemi, konče integrací a dokonce i představou sounáležitosti. Identity migrantů a uprchlíků se utvářejí velmi odlišně. Během svého výzkumu jsem zjistil, že literatura týkající se rozdílů mezi nimi není příliš rozšířená ani populární a mediální pokrytí téměř neexistuje. Zdá se, že kromě několika nevládních organizací, které poskytují jakýsi návod, jak se "poprvé setkat s uprchlíkem a migrantem", není na toto téma kladen téměř žádný důraz. Dále je důležité zmínit, že sami migranti a uprchlíci vidí rozdíl a cítí tuto propast v porozumění mezi oběma skupinami. Ukrajinské komunity, které se v České republice v průběhu let již vytvořily, mají s uprchlíky z Ukrajiny jen velmi málo společného, pokud jde o jejich osobní zkušenosti, a i když by se mohlo zdát, že uprchlíci budou tíhnout k



ukrajinsky mluvící menšině v České republice, není tomu tak vždy. Cílem práce je analyzovat problémy, ale také pomoc, které se ukrajinským imigrantům a uprchlíkům dostává po jejich příchodu do České republiky. Práce se také zaměřuje na vysvětlení posunu v migraci v souvislosti s historickými a současnými událostmi na Ukrajině a zaměřuje se na srovnání zkušeností imigrantů a uprchlíků. Práce se bude zabývat dvěma migračními obdobími. První z nich na konci 90. let 20. století se zaměřuje na měnovou reformu jako na faktor, který podnítl potřebu ze země vycestovat. Tato část se zaměřuje především na boj běžných ukrajinských občanů s ekonomickou krizí, přičemž se soustředí hlavně na oblast Bukoviny, neboť ta byla domovským regionem účastníků mého výzkumu. Důvodem pro zaměření na region Bukovina byla také společná historie s Českou republikou a také moje obeznámenost s touto oblastí, protože jsem zde strávil více než polovinu svého života. Druhá část se zabývá uprchlickou krizí způsobenou nevyprovokovanou invazí Ruska na Ukrajinu. Celkovým podtržením celé práce bude rozlišení migrace a integrace uprchlíků a migrantů. Můj výzkum mi ukázal jasné rozdíly mezi zkušenostmi migrantů a uprchlíků. Ukázal také, jak migranti prožívají, když ze zahraničí sledují, jak Ukrajina v průběhu času prochází obtížnými změnami. Tento pocit, často popisovaný jako bezmoc, byl častým pocitem, který spolu sdílela valná většina respondentů, kteří dožívají své životy za hranicemi Ukrajiny. Pocit sounáležitosti s českou společností se jim však dostavuje častěji než pocit sounáležitosti s ukrajinskou společností. Pocit "ukrajinskosti" často vyvolaly události na Ukrajině, které jakoby vyzývají k jednotě, tj. volby, sportovní turnaje, protesty, válka. Cílem závěru práce je uvést souvislosti, které se skrývají za slovy "migrant" a "uprchlík". Často se zdá, že lidé zapomínají, že uprchlík je někdo, kdo opustil svůj život, a pak mají ve tváři výraz překvapení, když je uprchlíkem jen normální člověk s drahým autem, místo dítěte v roztrhaném oblečení a s dírami po kulkách v batohu

## 1. Introduction

Even before the war in Ukraine has begun the Czech Republic was one of the most sought European destinations for Ukrainian immigrants and refugees. According to Eurostat's research (2021), 193 547 Ukrainian citizens is holding valid residence permits in the Czech



Republic, making it the second most popular country in Europe for Ukrainians to start a new life in. The first place belongs to Poland with approximately 651 thousand Ukrainian residence permit card holders. There are many factors as to why Ukrainians decide to move to the Czech Republic. The language factor is one of the most crucial ones. Ukrainian and Czech are both Slavic languages therefore native speakers of either one of the languages find it easier to learn the other language over a shorter period. Families with young children find the whole process of integration often easier for the children since children at a young age tend to learn the language faster and adopt new customs quicker. The similarity of cultures also plays a significant role in making it easier for Ukrainian to fully assimilate. The cause of larger migration waves in the past 10 years lies in the year 2013. Specifically, the so-called Maidan protest resulted in a short glimpse of independence from the Russian influence on the Ukrainian population. I will focus later in the thesis on comparing three eras of migration with real people's stories behind them. The first story follows at the time young Ukrainian woman leaving Ukrainian in 1996 because of the economic situation in Ukraine. The second story focuses on a family leaving after the Maidan protest and the Donbas conflict escalation in 2014 and the third story is about a family fleeing Ukraine in May 2022 while trying to escape the unprovoked Russian aggression in Ukraine. Ever since 2014, the relationship between Ukraine and Russia has become somewhat non-existent. The protests in Kyiv eventually led to Russia's strange claims to Ukrainian territory leading to the military escalation in Donbas. But it hasn't stopped just there, the conflict escalated to the point that the Russian government has annexed Crimea. That was the last straw for the Ukrainian government, and it put to rest any thoughts of having a real relationship with Russia ever again. It marked a point in history that forever meant that Russia has no intentions of befriending Ukraine. Quite the opposite. This has of course put Ukrainian officials in front of a crossroads. They had to now choose their new political ally. And so, the European Union, which President Putin has declared evil on multiple occasions, has become the beacon of light for Ukraine which has felt all alone next to the aggressor right at its door. This uncomfortable position has of course been somewhat of a dilemma. Choosing a pro-Russian or pro-European direction in terms of international relations has been part of political discourse for a very long time (Rotar, 2017) but eventually, it has led Ukraine to lean towards what we call the West.



My research is supported by the following questions:

- What were the push factors for the migrants to leave Ukraine?
- What were the pull factors that they discovered in the Czech Republic?
- What difficulties and challenges did they face upon their arrival and living in the Czech Republic?
- Do they feel like they belong to the Czech Republic? Are they Ukrainian or Czech?

To summarize: these questions stand on a theory of migration using terms such as push and pull factors (Jansen and Lee in Uherek, 2004). While pull factors are attractors in a different country, for example, better living standards, education, crime rate, political views, freedom, and democracy, push factors are conditions in our home country that simply make us want to leave. Those can be unemployment rates, economic crisis, and of course war.

## 1.1 Definition of terms

### 1.1.1 Migration

The term migration is often loosely used by the media and people in everyday life, that is why I will clearly define the meaning. The Latin word “migro” stands for “to resettle”. In the science world, the term migration refers to the study of movement, resettling provided that it can be related to temporary or ongoing movement, voluntary or involuntary (Henig 2009). The most common factors for the population movement are usually economic conditions and differences between countries, seeking a better living standard, or for example military conflicts and natural disasters. While people seeking better economic conditions follow where “the money is”, war refugees and immigrants flee to countries with stable politics and democracy (Drbohlav, Jaroszewicz 2016).

**Table 1.**

Terminology from IOM - Glossary on Migration

Asylum Seeker	A non-native individual that is in need of safety from being mistreated or incarcerated in a country that is not their own and is
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	waiting for a determination on their request for refugee status.
Internally displaced persons	Individuals or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border
Refugee	A person who, 'owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country
Seasonal migrant workers	Persons employed by a country other than their own for only part of a year because the work they perform depends on seasonal conditions. They are a subcategory of foreign migrant workers

Source: (IOM Glossary, 2019).

### **1.1.2 Legal Migration**

Legal migration can be defined as a movement of people that is regulated by the state.

There are many regulators when it comes to conditions that migrants must meet to enter



their desired destination. The Czech Republic regulates the resettling process by visa policies that apply to third-country citizens outside the European Union.

## *1.2 The Purpose of the Thesis*

I have been an active member of society in the Czech Republic in terms of helping Ukrainian migrants to integrate and tell their stories. Since the beginning of the war, I visited Ukraine on multiple occasions both as a journalist and as a person that feels that at least part of him belongs there. On February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, my life changed forever. Me and my family woke up to missed phone calls both from work and relatives in a hurry to tell us the horrible news. As a journalist, I was awake since 4 am to cover the stories about the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine. We all saw it coming but were still hoping in silence that it would never come to it. The very same day I was approached by my dear friend Salim Murad, Ph.D. who asked me to host a debate in Gymnasium Paměti Národa (Gymnasium focused on teaching the history of the Czech Republic) on the topic of Ukraine and Russia and provide the students with a historical context of the conflict. A week later I was sent as a journalist to the border crossing between Ukraine and Slovakia to cover the stories of arriving refugees and volunteers that arrived from all parts of Europe. From talking to some volunteers and people in refugee camps I have sensed almost anger that the Ukrainian refugees aren't as grateful as they have imagined them to be.

*"I expected them to smile or be happy that somebody is waiting for them on the other side. I gave them a blanket and food. They didn't even look at me and went on."*

(Anonymous volunteer in border crossing Ublá)

The reality of a refugee is that it is someone that had to leave their home not by choice but was forced out of it. We can not be surprised that a blanket and a chocolate bar do not make their heart beat stronger again. These people had to leave everything they loved and cared for behind to save what is dearest to them, their life, and the life of those in their lives. And even then it doesn't go for everyone. Lovers were split by war, men were sent to the front and women left the country to protect the children. This is the ugly privilege of people



experiencing horrible events. A privilege people from outside will never fully understand and therefore might get agitated that someone simply doesn't care for their help.



**Picture 1** – Refugee camp - Velké Slemence February 2022 Author: František Kadlec

Through the thesis, I hope to show the differences between a refugee and a migrant and the struggles they face. The differences in the help they are receiving and their desire to return home.

As a journalist, I have decided to tell the story of three groups of people that have undergone the same yet very different experiences in their life. I find it extremely important to search for differences in the stories behind migration because they are always very unique. Every migrant has a story to tell and no matter how similar it might sound to a story we have already heard it is their own experience that makes it theirs. I wanted to point out how the challenges differ based on people's gender, age, status, and the period that they decided to leave their country. What made them leave the country and what made them stay in their so-called host country.



### *1.3 Research methods*

The people that took part in this study were contacted through acquaintances and organizations that directly work with migrants and refugees. Information was collected by conducting 60-minute interviews in which the subjects described their experiences beginning with leaving the country and ending with their current feeling of belonging. The researcher (me) has also undergone many field trips to hometowns and the war zone in Ukraine to understand the severity of the situation and compare the experiences of the subjects with the others. All participants agreed to the recording of the interviews. We agreed on using pseudonyms instead of their names. All subjects were able to dictate the paste of the interview and decide when to take a break. All interviews were conducted in Ukrainian or Czech language. During the search for participants, I found it more difficult to find migrants from the 1996 era as many of them do not live in the Czech Republic anymore or prefer not to look back at their past. When it came to refugees the conversation was always very difficult. I have used snowball sampling to make the participants comfortable by being referred to them through a friend or a family member. Interview questions were followed up by open questions and were carried out in a comfortable talking environment. The participants were not forced to answer questions they did not feel comfortable with and had absolute control over the topics we would discuss.

**Table 2** – interview questions

1. Introduction – getting familiar with the interviewee.
2. Collecting information about the respondent
  - What is your name and age?
  - Where do you come from?
  - Where do you live right now?
  - What is your nationality?
3. Life in Ukraine
  - What conditions did you grow up in?
  - Can you share some details about your family?
  - What language did you speak at home?



- When did you first experience leaving your country? Can you share your feelings regarding the experience?
  - Tell me about your education.
4. Coming to the Czech Republic
- Did you experience any culture shocks upon your arrival? How was the first contact with the Czech people?
  - When did you decide to move to the Czech Republic?
  - Are you in touch with your relatives back in Ukraine?
5. Living in the Czech Republic
- How “Czech” or “Ukrainian” do you feel?
  - Do you speak Ukrainian to your relatives at home?
  - Do you find yourself in circles with other Ukrainians?
  - Do you ever consider returning home or leaving the Czech Republic?
  - How do you feel about watching Ukraine going through changes over the past few decades from abroad?

I will revisit the research in the future to get a deeper understanding of the integration of Ukrainian refugees over a longer period. I would also like to explore other Ukrainian regions other than Bukovina when it comes to ties with the Czech Republic. In my future research, I would also like to give special attention to youth migration as the interviews showed interesting differences between children and adults when it came to integration. The sample however not large enough for me to draw real hypotheses or conclusions based on their statements.

#### Fieldwork

Method Implemented	Participants involved	Type of Action	Date	Data collection support
Semi-structured interview	Women from <b>Table 3</b>	Informal Interview	24-9-2022	Recording interviews and transcription



Participant observation + Narrative interview	Immigrants crossing borders in March 2022	Semi Formal interviews	2-03-2022	Recording interviews, Field notes
Participant Observation + Semi-Structured Interview	Refugees from Ukraine + volunteers in refugee camps in Velké Slemence	Semi Formal Interviews	9-03-2022	Recording interviews, Field notes
Participant Observation	Refugees seeking shelter in Prague	Semi Formal Interviews + foreign police visits	July – November 2022	Field Notes, Recording Interviews

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1 *European identity*

European identity as a term could not avoid the spotlight any longer. The European society acknowledges more frequently its belonging and the influence of the EU on their everyday lives (Duchesne, 2008). However, it is still almost impossible to define a European identity.

### 2.2. *Belonging*

The answer to the philosophical question “Do people need belonging?” is easier than we would like to admit. The idea of a lone wolf in a society is often appealing to a lot but the reality remains that the question of how identity, solidarity, and community are created in Western democracies is crucial (Strath 2005). Strath and Beck (2003, 454) also accurately bring up the Hamlet question of belonging “To belong – or not to belong” as that is a question that often fills up the mind of an immigrant. Czech majority is raising its voice and



demanding assimilation of immigrants according to their views, however frequent contact between the majority and minority results in greater tolerance (Drbohlav 2011). Belonging is often explained as feeling at home. I am also a second-generation migrant. My mother is from Ukraine from the Bukovina region and I have spent a good amount of my childhood there. And I absolutely related to Strath's question. To my friends in Ukraine, I was "the Czech guy" and to my Czech friends I was "the kid from Ukraine". So where did I really belong? Where do all of us second-generation migrants belong. How empty does our sadness feel when our parents inform us of somebody from our family passing away, somebody that we have never met before. It always felt like standing at the door connecting two rooms, not being able to decide which of these rooms I want to enter. Both of these rooms are filled with two different lives and just as I start living in one, somebody comes and for whatever reason pushes me out the door to live in the other room for some time. But the door never stays shut, when I'm playing in my Czech room I can hear the Ukrainian room coming to life almost calling me back, leaving me with a feeling of missing out on the fun that is happening over there.

## *2.2. Honneth's theory of recognition – migrants and struggle for recognition*

Axel Honneth focuses on and defines three main parts when it comes to the struggle for recognition.

- 1) Love
- 2) Respect
- 3) Social esteem

According to Honneth, the socio-cultural identity lies in the 3rd sphere. We can reduce this idea to simply saying that one's identity in a sociocultural environment depends solely on his self-esteem, respect, and confidence. To gain somewhat of an expertise in these three areas one has to feel recognition by someone else. However, it can not be simply from anyone. We all know that we only feel truly recognized when someone whom we value recognizes us. Therefore, it can be said that to gain respect for us we struggle to gain respect from someone we respect (Anderson 1996). From this, we can also assume that the subjects of



the recognition theory are not simply just waiting for recognition, but are equally giving the recognition away. I would like to examine how the three spheres of recognition are in danger when it comes to refugees and migrants. Honneth's theory of recognition is not a stale pin in a timeline but it is a perpetual theory. That is due to the fact that a struggle for recognition is constant and rarely ever ending.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 *Migration in 1996*

##### 3.1.1 *Labor workers becoming citizens.*

The migration of Ukrainian labor workers to the Czech Republic has a long history mainly because of the similarities between the two countries that I have already pointed out. Not to mention the part of Ukraine that used to be former Czechoslovakian territory. We can date migrant workers coming from Halych and Bukovina to work summer jobs in Bohemia and Moravia back to the sixteenth century (Zilynskyj 1995 in Fedjuk). Coincidentally my first interviewee who migrated in 1996 is from the region of Bukovyna and did indeed come for seasonal work in an auto camp in the Southern Bohemian city of Třeboň.

Drbohlav correctly fights against somewhat of a cliché that labor workers come to the Czech Republic to steal jobs from Czechs "They mostly fill in gaps in the Czech job market. They usually work at positions that Czech people avoid and find not attractive and are not paid very well" (Drbohlav p. 111 2011).

"The number of Ukrainians in the Czech Republic has grown rapidly in the last 20 years. From less than 10,000 in the early 1990s, the official number of Ukrainian citizens who reside in the Czech Republic today has risen to over 100,000. " (Fedjuk 2016, p.137). Today the Ukrainian community is the largest minority in the Czech Republic. The Ministry of the Interior data shows that in 2014 only 15 Ukrainian citizens were caught crossing the border without valid documents (Moi 2015b), meaning that Ukrainians are very unlikely to enter and work illegally in the Czech Republic.

First ethnic Ukrainian migrants were not referred to as Ukrainians but as Ruthenians or even "Little Russians" (Zilynskyj, Kočík 2001 in Fedjuk). As stated before the increase in Ukrainian





minority in the land of Bohemia and Moravia in the 16th and 17th centuries was caused mainly by the arrival of students and mercenaries. The addition of the Halych and Bukovina regions to the Habsburg empire towards the end of the 18th century had an even stronger impact on the size of the Ukrainian minority. During that period there were many ethnic Ukrainian soldiers and of course seasonal labor workers, however, they did not fully understand their national belonging and therefore did not claim it.

The verge of the 19th and 20th centuries was marked by the now more consistent arrival of Ukrainian students enrolling in the University of Pířbram and the Czech University in Prague. They were the very first ambassadors of their cultural and social life and together they created an intellectual elite of this group (Zilynskyj 2002). Later, this educated group also created the Ukrainian-Ruthenian group, making it the first in the Czech territory.

### 3.1.2 Monetary Reform as a Reason to Leave the Country

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Ukraine has been like many other countries from the former Soviet Union, victim of economic instability and crisis. More specifically Ukraine suffered mass unemployment in the 1990s. After it gained its independence in 1991. About 50 to 60% of all people eligible for work couldn't find any. However, the government stated different numbers in official statistics around 5% (Bedzir 2001). That wasn't the only challenge that my interviewee faced. Karina was a young woman in her 20s during the monetary reform in 1993. She graduated from the Chernivtsi National University where she majored in Ukrainian language. The university was built by the Czech architect Joseph Glavka. Karina was originally from a small village called Nyzhni Stanivtsi, where she later returned to teach at a primary school. Nyzhni Stanivtsi is a small village with approximately 200 citizens, one church, and one elementary school where Karina and before then her mother taught the Ukrainian language. As Karina started working in the elementary school she started to earn her money. However, this "money" was coupons called Ukrainian Karbovanets. In fact, on May 11, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada (government officials in Ukraine) introduced its national currency for the very first time in independent Ukraine. But as stated before shortly after that in the year 1992 Verkhovna Rada decided to change to coupons in the hope to soften the blow of inflation (RBK- Ukraine, 2021).



These coupons were given to employees as normal salaries. However, banks wouldn't recognize them as real money and therefore people couldn't open savings accounts to save their money, or in this case coupons. This meant that people had to spend all their coupons because over time their value would decrease. The same applied to Karina and her mother. Karina would use all her coupons to buy materials such as cement and bricks to build a house since they couldn't save the money for later use. This was the case for many others not only in the same village but in the whole country of Ukraine.



**Picture 2** – Ukrainian Karbovanets in 1991

10 of Karbovanets coupons were worth 1 Ukrainian Hryvnia. People were getting paid in thousands of coupons. Later, the crisis hit rock bottom when Karina and many others started receiving her salary in material goods. Her salary would consist of chairs, plates, etc. During this time she would begin to feel the need not to necessarily move out of the country, but to go abroad to make money to pay workers to finish building the house.

*“The materials weren't unbreakable. Over time the cement would go bad and so would the bricks. We needed someone to finish building the house, but we had no money. We were getting paid in pieces of furniture and nobody needed that. At least we had our potato field...”*

(Karina 52)



Name	Hometown	Year of emigration	Current hometown	Push factor	Occupation in Ukraine	Occupation upon arrival to the Czech Republic	Current Occupation
Alexandra 55	Nizhny Stanivtsi	1996	Třeboň	Monetary reform	Nurse	Dishwasher	Restaurant owner and nurse at the elderly house
Iana 51	Vashkivtsi	1996	Trhové sviny	Monetary reform	Nurse	Housekeeper	Nurse – finished two university degrees
Karina 52	Nizhny Stanivtsi	1996	České Budějovice	Monetary reform	Teacher	Dishwasher	Tutoress
Katerina 51	Vashkivtsi	1996	Trhové sviny	Monetary reform	Manual worker	Housekeeper	Cook

**Table 3 – group A** of migrants from the Bukovina region

The table shows 4 women from the same region (different villages) who upon their arrival to the Czech Republic in 1996 started working in an auto camp in Třeboň. The names were changed for the purpose of anonymity and the safety of the subjects. Like Karina, all the other women experienced the same feeling to leave the country because of the monetary reform. Economic reasons are among the most common drivers of migration.

The concept of “drivers of migration” is dynamic, reflecting an interaction of personal, social, structural, environmental, and circumstantial factors working in tandem with local, national, regional, and global level incentives and constraints. Drivers influence the decisions to migrate, whether the migration is internal or international, regular or irregular, and/or temporary or permanent; and they operate along a spectrum between voluntary and involuntary movement.” (IOM Glossary, 2019).

It is no novelty that Ukraine was struggling greatly with the economic sector when it gained its independence for the first time. That of course resulted in people searching for better opportunities. However, it might have not seemed as if the currency was that weak. In 1996



it was possible to get 60 USD for 100 Hryvnias. According to sever [OANDA](#), a person would collect 2,6 USD for 100 Hryvnias as of June 2023. A couple of years later the Hryvnia experienced its first devaluation and was depreciated 3 times in total. In conclusion, consumer prices in 1996 rose by 39.7 percent. The gross domestic product contracted by 10 percent after almost a decade of economic crisis following the Soviet Union's implosion. Bastian Vollmer and Olena Malynovska divide the study of migration in the era of Ukrainian independence in the year of 1991 into three groups:

- Labour migration
- Irregular migration
- Ethnic migration and reparation

“Globally, irregular migration represents an important phenomenon with many important impacts upon societies and, thus, cannot be neglected in international migration research.” (Drbohlav 2009). Irregular migration applies to two scenarios: 1) A person enters a country's territory without valid documents. 2) a person is currently in a different country, however, their visa documents are no longer valid. Those are the two irregular situations that happen. (Jelínková [cit. 2023-07-04])

This devaluation of Hryvnia resulted in another crisis. Employers did not have enough money to pay salaries and therefore the government decided to pay people in items. All the women respondents remember being paid for stuff such as bags of sugar, lamps, chairs, beans, etc. Many people were forced to barter and trade their goods for other necessities. Karina and her family owned a field where they would grow potatoes and sunflowers which they would later trade with neighbors for meat, fruits, and other goods.

Serhiy Chepara recalls in an interview for BBC that his mother, who was working at a camping site in Lviv, was paid multiple times for sugar, rice, flour, and pasta (Kovalevska 2018). “440 in-depth interviews were conducted in migrant households in Kyiv, Chernivtsi, and another village close to Lviv. The research concluded that migration served as a survival strategy in the years of economic crisis and transition. A longitudinal perspective was added in 2002 when the same methodology was applied to discuss changes in structure, character, and destination of migrations (Pirozhkov et al. 2003 in Fedyuk 2016 ).” The very same reasons were stated by the studied subject group. The four women saw leaving the country



as the only way to earn money to sustain a comfortable level of living standard. 2 out of those women – Karina and Katarina underwent several other trips abroad to earn money. It was very common for Ukrainians from the Bukovina region, which was very close to the Romanian border, to buy cigarettes and vodka and then sell it in Romania at markets in small towns.

*Cigarettes were cheaper here and vodka as well. We just bought a bus ticket, went to a city that was close to the border, and started selling the product for profit. We couldn't speak the language, but we understood the business. (Katarina 51)*

Romania was not the only country that they sold their product in, they also visited Slovakian Košice with the same purpose. All of them described Košice as the most modern city they have ever seen and that is where they thought for the very first time of moving abroad instead of just visiting to earn money.

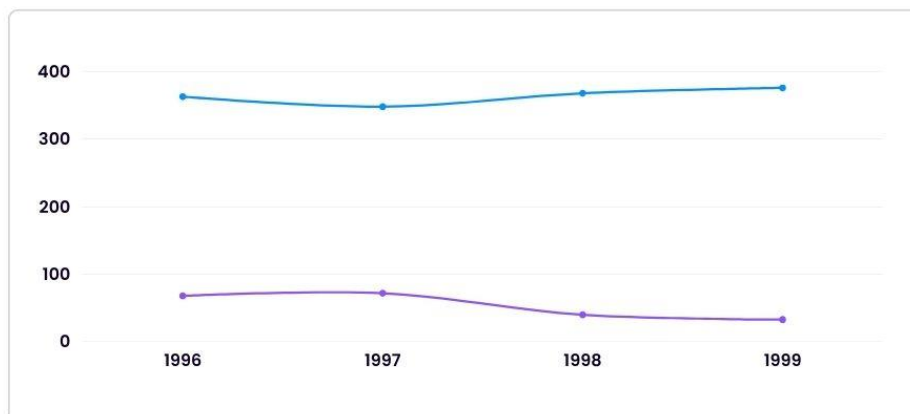
**Table 3** – what was possible to buy for 10 Hryvnias in Ukraine in the years 1996 and 2021 – data from RBC UA

Product	1996	2021
Baton – Ukrainian bread	31 pcs.	0,5 pc.
Meat	2,5 kg	0,2 kg
Chocolate	12 tablets	1/5 tablets
Benzine	16,5 L	0,3 L

It is important to mention however that the average salary in 1996 was 75-80 dollars. As of 2021, the data shows around 500 dollars. Whereas the Czech statistical office shows that the average salary in 1996 in the Czech Republic was 9825 Czk, which was around 363 USD at that time.



## Average salaries in USD



● Ukraine

● Czech  
Republic

**Graph 1** – Average salaries in Ukraine and the Czech Republic over the years 1996-1999 ( Data from the Czech statistical office and Ukrstat.gov)

The graph shows a clear decline in Ukrainian salaries whereas Czech salaries seem to slowly increase. All of the respondents stated that the years 1997 and 1998 were crucial in deciding their future in terms of resettlement. The salaries that the respondents carried back to Ukraine were that much more impactful as the Hryvnia was weak.

*“Working as a dishwasher brought me more money than being a teacher with a graduate diploma. It was a no-brainer after that. I did not love the job, but it made sense to move here and secure the family” (Karina 52)*

We can classify Honneth’s sphere of respect as rights and claims when it comes to immigrants. Respect in this sense from immigrants from 1996 is to show up to work on time and do their job. The recognition from the side of an employer and the government is a form of salary and rights that come with working in a workplace. In simpler terms, the participants felt more respect towards the Czech job than for their jobs in Ukraine as they were not getting the recognition that they have invested in the job. Acquiring a college degree to work



as a teacher would be classified as recognition of respect for the institution. However, getting paid in goods would be a violation of this unspoken contract and would create a feeling of not belonging. Therefore we can say that for successful integration we need to ensure that both parties are receiving the proper amount of recognition about mutual respect.

### *3.1.2 Religion as a Tool of Integration*

Ukraine has a long religious history and the people in the Bukovina region are specifically known for their religious practices. Religion can become more and more important in a phase of an individual's life when he or she faces great social change in a host country (Berry 1997). That was the case for the group of women in the study sample. All of them were baptized Greek-Catholic. Previously mentioned Halich was the cradle of the Greek Catholic church which was instituted in the year 1596 (Cirkev-reckokatolicka). The chapel of the Lord's Anguish in České Budějovice had a special place in all of their minds as it felt familiar with a Ukrainian pastor Ruslan Zassiedko head of the institution, who was giving religious ceremonies in a way that they recognized. In the year 1996, there were 46 303 Ukrainians in the Czech Republic (Number of foreigners – Czech Statistical Office). Compared to the year before the number of people carrying Ukrainian citizenship grew by approximately 64%. The number of Ukrainian labor workers and migrants doubled between the years 1994 and 1995. The Czech Republic was experiencing more and more migrants from Ukraine every year and small communities were created. One of which was the unofficial community of Ukrainians surrounding the chapel of Lord's Anguish.

*“We would feel at home after every ceremony. The chapel celebrated the holidays in the same way we did and it made us feel welcomed. Czech people were not very religious. I didn't see many of them going to the church nearby.” (Alexandra 54)*

A poll conducted by WIN-Gallup International network shows that the Czech Republic is the second most atheist country in the world. Most “convinced atheists” were in Japan at 31%, then the Czech Republic at 30% (Radio Prague International, 2012). The poll shows the



difference between the two cultures and one of the strongest culture shocks for the arriving Ukrainians. Another one was the use of food utensils.

*“We were from a village. We eat everything with a spoon only. I was so confused when the boss took us to a restaurant and I had to use a fork and knife. I have never done that in my life.” (Karina 52)*

As we have earlier established the sense of belonging is a very fragile feeling. One that someone might not ever experience fully. From talking to the participants I have also found out that while they felt like they belonged again when they would attend church ceremonies, they also felt like they belong less. What does that mean? It means that they felt Ukrainian again. Something they have associated with being Ukrainian was again part of their lives. However, it was not part of the lives of Czechs and that made them feel as if they do not belong. The alienation that Karina experienced during her dinner at the restaurant might seem like a funny anecdote right now. But at that moment it reminds her that maybe the place at the table is not hers. Maybe she does not belong. And symbolically when she would learn how to use a fork and knife she again felt like she belongs. All these small rituals and little moments that immigrants experience daily make them realize how fragile belonging is. They would often try to spot similarities between themselves and Czechs to feel a connection to their life. Ultimately any cultural similarity was a step on a staircase leading to a place called belonging. But every knife and fork situation would set them a step back.

In Honneth's theory, this study would refer to the self-esteem sphere. This sphere specifically focuses on us as part of society and our contribution to it. Becoming a valued member of society by recognition. In their home village in Bukovina, all of the participants were valued members of their society as they would describe themselves as “good Christians” based on the norms that the society has non verbally agreed upon. In simple terms, you were not a bad person if you attended church every Sunday and with that would come a certain amount of recognition as the society in Bukovina would value going to the Church. The same approach did not work in the Czech Republic as the norms for gaining recognition as means of self-esteem are not correlated with religious practices.





### 3.1.3 Research findings

#### 3.1.4 “Us vs Them”: identity in the Czech Republic over the Years

A rather interesting division happened as the participants arrived in the Czech Republic. The so-called negotiation of identity was happening on multiple levels. One of them was, of course, creating a “bubble” of Ukrainian-speaking individuals in the auto camp in Třeboň. Outside of this bubble, they would each go on their separate adventures to get to know Czech people. According to findings from interviews they found the process much more difficult when done as a group. This meant that they felt as if they did not belong to the Czech Republic more as a group than as an individual. It also had to do with the fact that locals felt more comfortable approaching one Ukrainian as opposed to approaching a group of people that spoke a different language. More interestingly the group of Ukrainians were able to quickly spot another Ukrainian and even identify their background – that is their region of birth. It is important to mention that they would prefer a company of Czechs to the company of Ukrainians from the Eastern part of Ukraine – a region close to the Russian borders. They would almost avoid befriending Russian-speaking people. However, they would not have an issue with Czechs speaking in Russian to them as they understood that Russian was the only language taught at Czech schools up until that point and saw it as a nice gesture symbolizing their acceptance ritual.

Other participants mentioned that they would draw these parallels between Czechs and Ukrainians from certain regions. This would help them understand the Czech mentality better and make their socializing easier.

*“We were all from a village and so naturally we felt more comfortable talking to other villagers or people from small towns. People in Prague or even in České Budějovice seemed so different from us.” (Katarina 51)*

It is no surprise that they have decided to live in smaller settlements rather than move to the capital of the Czech Republic. Two of the participants live in Trhové Sviny with a population of 5 204 inhabitants. One participant lives in Třeboň with a population of 8 625 and the last one lives in České Budějovice with a population of 93 thousand inhabitants. All of them described Karina (living in České Budějovice) as the most adventurous.



The integration process of this Ukrainian group was easy as they all stated mainly because it felt “easier to fit in as a worker than as a person”. After 3 years of working at the same place, they all acquired job positions at different workplaces thanks to the same employer that was their job supervisor at the auto camp. During that time the visa application was not so simple, it was very expensive, and the process was lengthy. The employer had to issue a request for the workers to enter the country as labor workers, creating a sort of invitation for them. Touristic visas were almost impossible for Ukrainians to acquire. All women from interviews stated that even upon their arrival their working documents were still not ready and as a result, they worked illegally for the first two months.

*“Whenever we would see someone unknown approach in a car we were told to hide and not come out until someone comes to get us.” (Alexandra 54)*

This theme was very common at that time for migrant workers but none of them minded the issue as they were still earning higher salaries than they would be in their home country.

### 3.1.5 *Watching Maidan from Abroad*

The Maidan Revolution or also known as the Revolution of Dignity took place in February 2014. However, it started earlier in November 2013 as a series of protests known as Euromaidan with the goal to define Ukraine’s position when it came to international relations. As the name hints the protests were in fact focusing on showing Ukraine’s Euro relations and the will of the Ukrainian people to join it. The sole trigger for Euromaidan was the rejection of greater European integration of Ukraine after a deal rejection by the president at that time Viktor Yanukovich. A common slogan for Euromaidan became “Stole our dream”. Yanukovich argued that the trade with Russia was too important to lose which Ukraine would lose if it had joined the EU (BBC 2018).

Name	How did it feel watching all this go down from abroad?
Karina	<i>I felt so proud. I wanted to be there. I was listening to Ukrainian songs and was stuck to the TV screen. I felt as if I was trapped in the</i>



	<i>square of independence with them.</i>
Alexandra	<i>Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes. And once again the Ukrainians were heroes. They fought for what we all thought.</i>
Katerina	<i>The protests got violent and that scared me. I didn't want anyone to get hurt. I had relatives on the side of the police and amongst the protestors.</i>
Iana	<i>I felt hopeful. I felt like it might change something. We were all so hopeful... and what happened after that....</i>

**Table 4** – statements of women related to the Revolution of Dignity 2014.

The protests were gaining momentum. At first, Yanukovich tried to break them off by force by sending berkut (internal security forces) following up by legislative changes aimed at limiting the freedom of Ukrainians. This was by no means a unanimous protest; it drew a line between the East and the West in Ukraine. Often those in support of Russia were Russian-speaking Ukrainians which Putin had used to create a pretense of saving the ethnic Russians from the lawless Ukrainians.

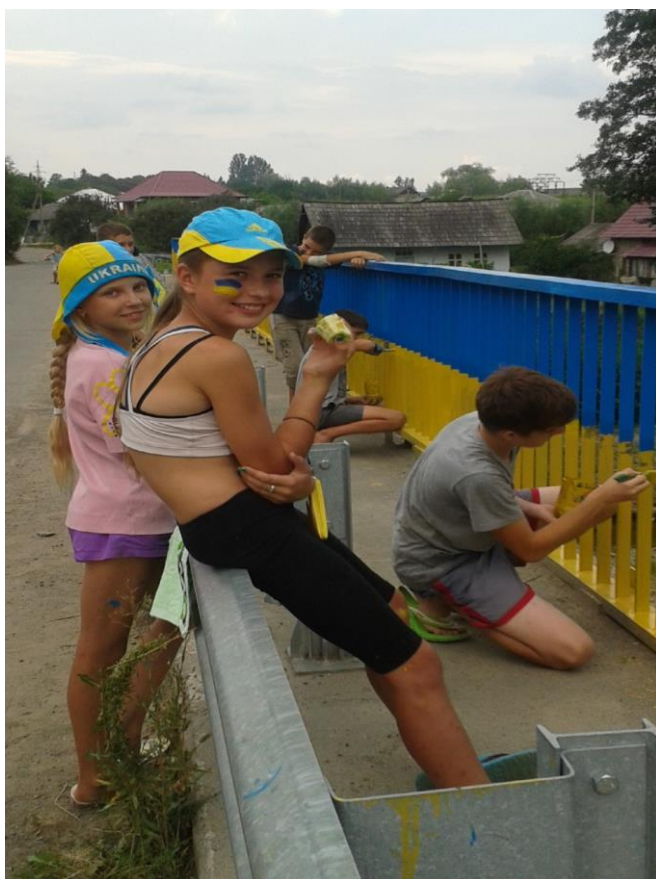


**Picture 4** -Ukraine's language divide. Data source: 2001 national census. (Laris Karklis/Washington Post)

The map shows the clear division between Ukrainian and Russian speakers as the division between East and West. A division that is later used as a tool to start a war. This is the third attempt to define Ukrainian politics as pro-EU. The first spark of EU-directed politics was the independency in 1991 followed up by the Orange Revolution (2005) and Maidan Revolution was the third wave of Ukrainians voicing their opinion. January 17<sup>th</sup> during the Euromaidan protests was marked by the call of public organizations for a last resistance, a last stand. The idea was simple. People would gather at the square of Independency in Kyiv. Two days later police riots would break up with the intent to stop the protestors from using police brutality. The conflict escalated to the point where protestors started making Molotov cocktails and throwing stones at the police. January 22<sup>nd</sup> was the day that will live in the mind of Ukrainians forever. A police sniper shot dead two protestors Serhiy Nigoyan and Mykhailo Zhyznevskiy. This was a point of no turning back for the Ukrainians fighting for their freedom. There was no more talking or negotiating. There was only demanding and taking what they believed to be theirs. A month of chaos took hold of Ukraine after the sniper



incident and the end was near. Trapped at the Maidan square the protestors formed a line and marched towards the parliament. The Ukrainian law enforcement started shooting resulting in almost a hundred dead. Keep in mind that the protestors were unarmed. On February 20<sup>th</sup> the parliament under Yanukovych took a vote on reducing the brutality of the police with a positive result for the people of Ukraine and shortly after that Yanukovych fled the country. All of this was witnessed by hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians living abroad. Watching and holding their breath as people were dying for a life that the immigrants had often already had. The summer of 2014 was especially emotional for all of the participants as that is the time they would often return to their families. The same way I and my family did. I remember the summer feeling so hopeful. My grandma said a sentence that was stuck in my head for years after that: “The fight isn’t over, but we sure showed them what Ukrainians are made of.”. I did not fully understand what she meant by that at that time.



**Picture 5** – Nizhny Stanivtsi 2014 – bridge being painted by local children to the colors of the Ukrainian flag Author: František Kadlec



This was a theme that the Ukrainians were adopting all over the country. The bridges resembling the colors of the Ukrainian flag were soon seen all over the Ukrainian territory. The very same bridges would almost a decade later be destroyed by Russian missiles.

In relation to Honneth's theory, this would work on two levels. My findings were that "Love" would relate to fear for the lives of protestors. But as I have stated earlier for the recognition to be complete, there need to be two sides recognizing each other. The immigrants watching Maidan from Czech apartments did not feel recognized by the Ukrainians protesting because they are somewhat unaware of their existence. That was not the case for everyone. The moment of recognition was then expected upon their arrival in summer. But they would often be met with words of "You got it good, you left and we have to suffer." So this one-sided love again affected alienation in their "own" country.

### 3.2 War refugees

February 22nd, 2022 has forever changed the Ukrainian perception of Russia. In previous chapters, the discussion was focused on Ukraine leaning toward the EU whereas now we should take into account also leaning away from Russia. Earlier I discussed the division between Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers. Ironically, the invasion of the Russian army has resulted in more unity amongst Russian and Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians than any other Revolution in the history of Ukraine. The reason for that is quite simple. Russian forces are damaging and occupying mostly Eastern cities as they are closer to their borders and easier for them to access by water and move their military equipment on land as well. That part of Ukraine is inhabited mostly by Russian-speaking Ukrainians who now have seen the true side of Putin's politics. He who once was the voice of the Russian minority in Ukraine and claimed to be their saviour is now the bully who uninvited comes and takes land while damaging everything that stands in his way.

The Czech Republic was between the years 1948 – 1989 very homogenous. It was the Velvet Revolution that sort of marked the beginning of a change in Czech society (Drbohlav 2011). The Czech Republic hasn't seen the same number of Ukrainian incomers up until February 2022. As of July 18<sup>th</sup>, there are 345 880 refugees from Ukraine in the Czech Republic. It is by



far the highest addition of foreign population in such a short period in the history of the Czech Republic.

**Table 4** – sample group out of a total of 30 refugees from Ukraine

Name	Age	Status	Place of birth
Alina	40	Married - Mother	Vinnytsia
Anna	38 (see the story in the appendix)	Married - Mother	Cherson
Stepan	12	Student	Kyiv
Yana	36	Married - Mother	Mykolaiv
Valeriy	7	Student	Cherson
Maxim	8	Student	Vinnytsia
Ruslana	35	Married - Mother	Odessa

The common theme for all of the refugees was the hurry in which they left their houses. Most of them did not think twice or looked behind. Interviewing participants from the Chernihiv region – specifically from Senkivka (Village standing on the borders between Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus) revealed the shocking truth of the invasion.

*“It was early in the morning. I went to buy milk and bread because we were afraid that after the invasion there wouldn’t be any. On my way back.... I couldn’t believe my eyes. There was a tank. I moved out of the way and waited. Then there was another. Soon there was a line of tanks marching down the main road.” (Alexandra 31)*

Many of the participants and their friends and family would take what they could and leave their homes in the hope to save their lives. Men of course could not leave the country and that would tear some families apart.



*"I left with the kids, but my husband stayed. I worry I might not see him again." (Anna 38)*

## 4. Conclusion

The differences in the experiences of migrants and refugees are clear in every aspect of migration. Starting from push factors: economic crisis for the majority of migrants before the war whereas the military conflict for the refugees from February 2022 until now. It is important to mention that although the refugees had far less time to make their decision they also had far more options to choose their destination. Countries all over the world were opening up their doors and gates to those in need and granting them the status of refugee with financial aid and the benefits of a citizen of that country. That would include things such as social and health insurance, living aid, and of course many organization that would help the refugees with relocation, acquiring lost items, clothes, food, etc.

### 4.1 Interview Answers and Conclusions

The immigrant group from 1996 stated that their push factors were purely of economic nature. At first they also only wanted to make money abroad to bring it back to Ukraine. Over time their job opportunities in the Czech Republic improved and staying in the Czech Republic became an option. An option that they all chose, again purely based on economic reasons. They however found the process of integration very easy and pleasant which resulted in all of them staying in the Czech Republic as of today. When it came to the refugees unanimity in deciding where to live after the war was not there. 60% of the refugee sample are planning to return to Ukraine as soon as the situation becomes stable again. 40% have joined their family members in the Czech Republic and began to think of a new life. Over half of the 40% have already found jobs that they would like to pursue after the war is over.

When it came to integration the migrants in the 1990s did not face any struggles according to their statements. However, many of them would end up later joining organizations to help incoming immigrants in the years after that. One of those organizations was the Czech Center where Karina would help immigrants after the Euromaidan and now she helps





refugees during the war in Ukraine. She helps them with complicated administration and getting used to the new system as well as accompanying them to important meetings, etc.

From interviewing the refugees receiving help in the Czech Center I have found out that their experiences were much more pleasant compared to the ones that did not receive help in centers and had to figure out their new way of living on their own. The benefits that being a member of the Czech Center were mostly:

- Language barrier – the center would provide them with translators which would make their errands easier to deal with.
- Mentorship – refugees would often travel to countries to join their relatives that already lived there. However, there were still many of those who traveled alone and therefore needed guidance through everyday steps and struggles.
- Language courses – the center would also provide refugees with language courses
- Mock interviews – center workers would help refugees prepare for job interviews and in some cases help them seek out work opportunities.

27 out of 30 refugees have said that they would prefer that the first person they talked to was a Ukrainian or spoke fluent Ukrainian. From interviewing 18 people at the border crossing between Ukraine and Slovakia in Ubľa – I have concluded that the volunteers at the borders would make a better impression on refugees if they spoke Ukrainian. 7 out of the 18 were Ukrainian speaking and when encountering Czech and Slovak volunteers speaking in Russian they referred to them as those who use the “language of the aggressor”. The rest (11) were Russian-speaking Ukrainians and appreciated having someone to talk to in their native tongue. The rest said that it did not matter to them as they were coming to see their family.

According to my findings and comparing with Honneth’s theory I believe that the biggest difference between the experiences of migrants and immigrants is in the recognition. Labor workers can often encounter people that view them as “job stealers” and therefore give them no recognition or at least no positive recognition. Refugees can be met more often



than not with a recognition sphere of love and compassion. It is however more difficult for the refugees to recognize the society back. This means that the mental toll that war and the horrors that come with it have on people leave a mark so deeply engraved into their minds that simply recognizing someone for their generosity is not as simple.

Participants from the 1996 era expressed that they appreciated any effort of people trying to talk to them and they would try to learn the Czech language to increase their job opportunities in the future and integrate themselves properly into the society.

We, who saw the war up close have an ugly privilege of being so alienated from everyone that has not when it comes to forming an opinion on it. I recall reading a journal about a 7-year-old boy from Mariupol. It said:

*“They are coming. Last week I saw my cat die. Yesterday I saw my grandma and grandpa die and today is the death of Mariupol.”*

The 7-year-old boy was amongst the children hiding in Mariupol Theatre when the Russian pilots started their bombing. Nobody from that opera survived. An exposition in Kyiv called “De ti?” – had a double meaning где ты – stands for “Where are you?” a question people would ask over the phones to their loved ones all over Mariupol hoping to hear the voice of someone that has survived the horror. The second meaning is Дети – which stands for “Children” to commemorate the death of up to 1200 women and children hiding in the Mariupol theatre. In an attempt and hope that the Russian soldiers would spare the women and children, Mariupolians would write in big letters “Дети” in front of the theatre, they would mark their cars with the same words in the hope that the tank would notice, and



wouldn't destroy that car.



**Andrei Kurkov - Twitter**

Well, this is the reality. Hundreds of cars with the word that leaves an emptiness in our hearts. This is the burden of the refugees. To carry harsh truths and realities and encounter people that might route for them from the sidelines, but never grasp the full scale of reality.

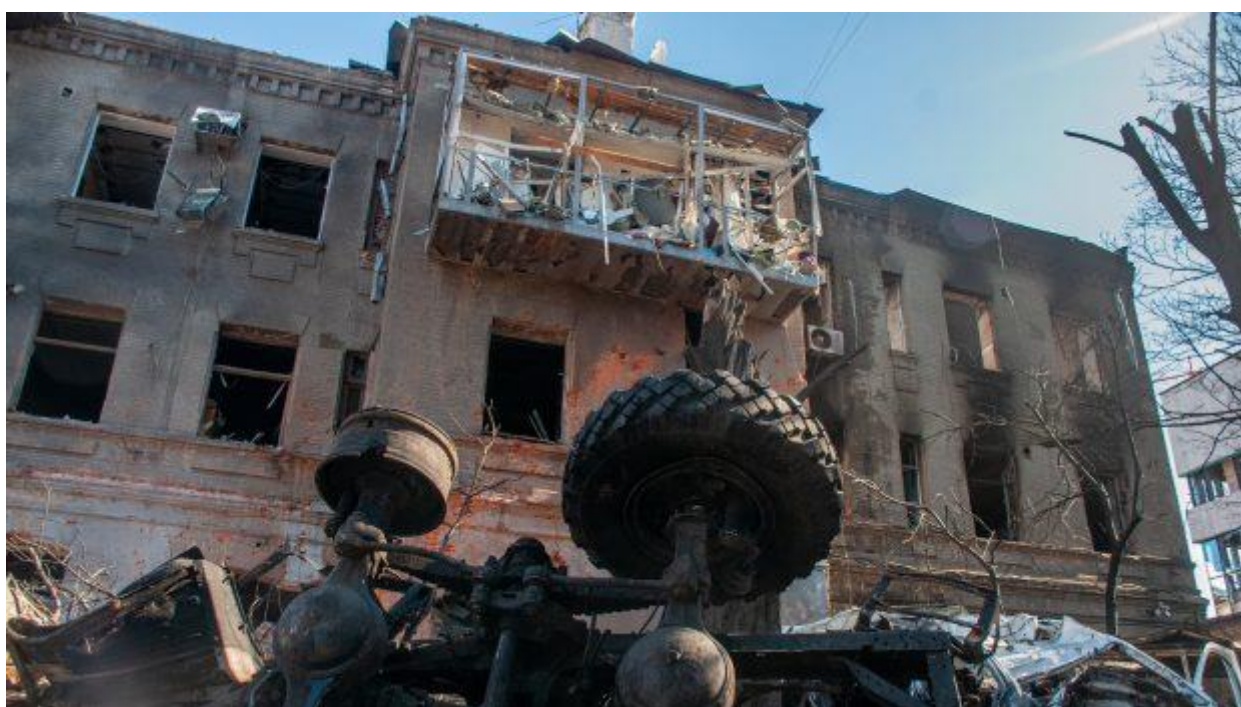
## 5. Appendix – translated interviews – published by the Czech Radio

Interview with Anna from Cherson. Annas' story begins in the Czech Republic on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. She moved to a city in Southern Bohemia to pursue her career and seek a better economic situation for herself and her family. Her husband, a fleet admiral, was taking care of their 5-year-old son and they were supposed to join Anna in České Budějovice once she has arranged all the papers. They were supposed to meet in Kyiv on February 23<sup>rd</sup> to exchange needed visa documents and leave together for the Czech Republic. Anna was however contacted by the officials at the embassy that there are few more papers for her to



sign and therefore she couldn't leave on the 23<sup>rd</sup> as they have previously agreed upon. She moved the date to the 25<sup>th</sup>. On February 24<sup>th</sup> the war broke out and she was separated from her son and husband. The story however has a happy ending.

**'He lived in the basement and was afraid of every explosion.' A Ukrainian woman from Kherson met her five-year-old son after a month.**



**Picture 5** – Damaged city Cherson | Photo: Marienko Andrii | Source: Fotobanka Unian

The Ukrainian Anna from Kherson not long ago experienced the worst moments of her life. Her five-year-old son stayed in Ukraine because of the war, while she was in the Czech Republic. They were connected only through the Internet. But after a month they finally met. The story of Anna and her son, which you could hear on the Radiožurnál broadcast at the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has a happy ending.

*“My five-year-old son stayed in Ukraine, lived with relatives in the basement for a whole month, and was afraid of every shot and explosion. He missed friends, sun, and food. But*



*after a month, they no longer had the strength to live like this. People began to leave occupied Kherson en masse. They risked their lives and those of their children."*

This is how the Ukrainian Anna describes the recent time for Radiožurnál when she was still separated from her son by the war. But now it's different. She met her son again thanks to relatives.

*"My relatives tried to leave with my son a total of three times. But they had to return each time because the roads were impassable," she explains.*

*"However, they managed to get out of the city on the fourth day. Along the way, they encountered several Russian patrols. They always had to take off their clothes and show them their phones. In some cases, Russian soldiers kept the phones. I was waiting for them at the border with Moldova, where I took my son," Anna says with relief.*

She now lives in České Budějovice with her son. She is looking for a job and her son goes to kindergarten where he has new friends.

*"Although I am full of joy because my son is fine, my friends and family have remained in Ukraine. The situation in Kherson is complicated now. The city is closed and they don't let anyone out," she adds.*

She is very grateful to her relatives. According to her, a difficult test awaits them now. According to Anna, the Russian soldiers are planning to declare the Kherson People's Republic in a referendum.

*"They already carry Russian flags there and sell Crimean sausages and food. People gathered there every day for demonstrations. But the soldiers started shooting at them with rubber bullets and throwing smoke bombs at them. Now he only goes to demonstrate once a week, but it doesn't help anything. Russia does what it wants. We don't know what will happen next. Above all, I wish everyone peace."*

Anna adds that she is looking forward to returning to Ukraine with her family. According to her, the situation is complicated, but she believes that everything will turn out well in the end.



*Story of Olexander Kostyukevitch - Internally displaced person – see Table 1.*

## **A cafe from Kherson is doing business again. 'I started to not think about bad things,' he says now in Kyiv**

Businessman Olexander Kostyukevic owned a successful cafe in Kherson. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine deprived him of everything. Even that didn't break his entrepreneurial spirit, and he recently started making coffee for people in Kyiv, where he fled with his family. It offers customers, for example, a cappuccino with Tabasco and chocolate.



**Picture 6** – coffee shop in Kyiv Photo: Patrik Salát | Source: Český nozzles

Olexander prepares coffee with Tabasco and chocolate in his small Kyiv cafe. This is one of his specialties, which he has countless written on the blackboard with chalk. He invented most of them himself in his enterprise in Kherson.

*"We arrived at the beginning of September and the cafe has been operating for the second week so far. We don't know any people here yet. They just installed our showcase on Friday. We are working on it and we are not done yet, there are still a lot of processes to complete,"* describes the new beginning.



Oleksandr's work is helped by his wife and two small children. The whole family managed to get to Kyiv via a long detour from the Russian-occupied part of Ukraine.

*"We drove through Crimea, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Because we saw how Russian soldiers shot two cars trying to leave Kherson, we didn't want to risk it, that's why we went around it in such a big arc,"* explains Olexander.

Practically immediately after arriving in Kyiv, they started looking for premises for a new cafe, until they found a small cozy place in the wider center of the city, as he describes: "We immediately got to work, so as not to sit at home and burden the state, and in short, not to think about the bad things. That's why we do what we do best."

Nevertheless, Olexander hopes that he will be able to return to Kherson. Not only his business remained in the city, but also his parents from Kyiv.

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Pedagogická  
fakulta  
Faculty  
of Education

Jihočeská univerzita  
v Českých Budějovicích  
University of South Bohemia  
in České Budějovice

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