

Horrifying Stories From Ukraine: It's 1942 All Over Again

Sitting at a small table, staring down, she slowly spun her cup of tea in a circle between her fingers with both hands. Next to her sat a plate with one slice of bread and a thin slice of cheese with a square of butter. The first food she had seen in over four days.

Oksana survived the attack in her village during the first 72 hours of war but was captured with her 6-year-old son as they tried to drive southwest to Kyiv to escape the Russian advance.

At the Russian "filtration camp," she was stripped of her purse, IDs, passport, driver's license, credit cards and smartphone and was then placed on a bus. After a three-day trip north across the Russian border on trucks, buses and trains, she did not know where she was, only somewhere south of Moscow in a small elementary school cafeteria.

A man in a church "Help Organization" uniform walked over and sat down across from her, asking if she was comfortable. Not lifting her head, Oksana nodded. He began to ask her bland, innocuous questions about the trip, the stress and her child.

Hypersensitive to betrayal and her presence in enemy territory, and concerned for the safety of her child, she sipped her tea and only replied with one-word or short answers. He then spoke of the church work helping the Ukrainians relocate to "safety." Then he asked her what town she was from. She gave the name of the village.

Smiling, attempting to show genuine care, he pleasantly asked if her husband was still alive. Her natural instinct for self-

protection immediately triggered a silent alarm in the pit of her stomach.

Then came the words, "Is he fighting?"

Holding the cup, she froze.

Tracking Mobile Crematoriums

U.S., European, Ukrainian and Russian government sources have confirmed that Russian army mobile crematoriums are part of the total overall vehicle invasion package inside Ukraine. These include tanks, armored personnel carriers (APCs), artillery, fuel trucks, mine laying and missile launch vehicles, and others.

It was believed that the crematoriums were designed for the purpose of incinerating Russian soldiers killed in battle as in 2014 so as not to incite resistance to the war by having constant images of thousands of soldiers' coffins returning home and flooding nightly domestic news media.

Other sources say that part of the Russian strategic military plan was also, when possible, to be able to cremate Ukrainian civilians killed in the shelling, or those who have been tortured, raped and murdered, to avoid creating war crime evidence of mass graves.

"Russian leadership has ordered its troops to remove any evidence of crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine, and now they are using 13 mobile crematoriums to burn civilian bodies in the city of Mariupol." The source was the Main Intelligence Department of Ukraine Defense Ministry, according to a Ukrinform correspondent.

France 24 reports that Mayor of Kyiv Dr. Vitali Klitschko said that Russian forces have been using these mobile crematoriums in a number of sites around Kyiv. Other sites where these crematoriums were in operation include Chernihiv as well as

Novoaidar, Luhansk region.

However, among Ukraine and NATO commanders an even more sinister realization is emerging.

Cities, Towns and Villages

When frontline Ukraine defense forces move into an area or village retaken from Russian troops, the reconnaissance elements of the ground force go in to perform a wide sweep of the area visually and with drones, first in search of any remaining enemy elements such as snipers and infantry and then for mines, booby traps and any surviving civilians.

As the soldiers walk around the debris and dead bodies scattered across the ground, silence and the scent from burning buildings fills the atmosphere.

While it was assumed that the majority of civilians left seeking safety before the shelling began, Ukrainian soldiers were still expecting to find civilians who had survived the attacks.

But more often, there are none.

They are now coming to a more horrific realization: the population is missing.

1942 All Over Again

Russian television reported two days ago that updated estimates from government authorities helped by the Russian Orthodox Church have forcibly deported over 723,000 Ukrainian civilians, 110,000 of them children, by truck and train into "transit camps" and other areas inside Russia since the war began.

Besides Russian reports, the only way to come to a realistic working figure of Ukrainians forcibly deported into Russia is to match the known population of a town or village before

February 24, 2022, from the returning refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced People), adding those killed in the shelling in order to come up with a best-guess estimate of the number of civilians missing and forcibly deported like cargo into Russia.

On Russian state TV Channel 1 today, Karen Shakhnazarov stated: "The opponents of the letter 'Z' [the symbol of Russia's invasion] must understand that ... there will be no mercy for them. ... It's all become very serious. In this case, it means concentration camps, re-education and sterilization"!

Massive Deportations Again

The people taken from Ukrainian towns and villages have faced train journeys into Russia, sometimes lasting two to five days or longer. Many different reports confirm there are minimal toilet facilities and little or no food or water. Other people were deported in trucks, exposed to the weather.

Upon arriving at the transit camps, men, women and children are quickly off-loaded and divided up. They're made to wait in long lines and then face an interrogation process as the first step. Russian security forces question civilians sometimes for as many as 12 hours, wanting to know if they have any Ukraine Defense Force members in their families, ties to the government or intelligence agencies, or if they are journalists or bloggers.

Their ID and travel documents are taken. Smartphones are confiscated and all passwords are obtained one way or another. Searches of the contact details of their friends, co-workers and families are commenced, with the results funneled to Russian intelligence.

There are a number of survivors sharing stories on social media. Reports of fingers being cut off, electric shock torture, beatings, broken ribs and cracked skulls are confirmed. The total number of civilians killed at each site

is unknown. Witnesses report seeing mobile crematoriums in operation at the transit camps.

Russian security forces are especially active in attempting to identify those who have witnessed the atrocities at the “filtration camps” and “eliminate them.”

Narcissistic Psyops

In a narcissistic attempt to divide Western opinion, the Russian Ministry of Defense has partnered with the Russian Orthodox Church through the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation (EMERCOM).

The Russian Orthodox Church and “aid or help organization” personnel work with Russian security forces to obtain any information they can glean.

The Russian Orthodox Church has been involved in the planning, forceable transport and housing of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilians throughout Russia. By having church personnel or “aid organization” personnel visibly present and involved in the transport of civilians over long distances, it psychologically creates a false assurance of safety to captured Ukrainians that “everything will be all right” and works to dampen their fear, decreasing their options to choose to escape along the route.

As part of the sixth wave of sanctions, the EU Commission, according to the European External Action Service document, placed the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, on sanctions. Kirill is considered “one of the most prominent supporters of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine.” The contract to transport the Ukrainians with the Ministry of Emergency Situations is substantial.

Where the Russian priests, clergy and layman ministers take the civilians is unknown. Using some of the clergy in national news events, a number of Ukrainians have been placed in high-

profile churches and monasteries to generate reactions of goodwill, placate Russian sentiment and divide the West.

Ukrainian investigative group reports: "Mass deportation and resettlement of Ukrainians on the territory of Russia are possible indicators of genocide. Several criminal proceedings regarding such actions of the occupiers have already been initiated in Ukraine."

Reports today confirm that over 300 residents of Mariupol were transported to Nakhodka, Primorsky Krai, Russia, which is approximately 9,600 kilometers from Mariupol on the coast near North Korea and across from Japan.

Senior OSCE staffers have also confirmed that there are credible reports on the numbers and distant destinations Ukrainians are being shipped to.

However, they aren't the only stops for Ukrainian civilians. A number of ad-hoc prison sites exist inside Ukraine and throughout Russia in the prison archipelago, where disappearances are the norm.

Housing and feeding 723,000 Ukrainians is no easy task. With Zürich, Switzerland's city budget straining to the breaking point under the burden of 40,000 Ukrainian refugees, it is dreadful to consider the conditions under which the Ukrainians are suffering inside Russia.

A Five-Pronged Attack

While most people view war as one army against another, this war has evolved into five distinct spheres of conflict, all of which must be contested and won:

1. Army vs. army
2. The kidnapping and forcible transport of entire populations of civilians into Russia, estimated to be over 723,000 people

3. A scorched-earth policy of complete destruction of property, buildings and homes

4. The sophisticated, multilevel cyberwar waged by Russian GRU launched against NATO countries combined with the public disinformation campaign on television, internet and across social media

5. The creation and design of the humanitarian crisis to cripple neighboring EU member states by flooding them with 5.7 million migrating refugees and with 11 million internally displaced people in Ukraine.

Genocide and War Crimes

Given the evidence mounting from survivors and media organizations, the Russian Orthodox Church and affiliated aid organizations should never be trusted. Operating as an arm of the Russian security forces' intelligence-gathering operations and active in the transport of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilians into Russia, evidence is mounting revealing genocide and that individuals and organizations should be held responsible and charged with war crimes.

War Crime Evidence

Monitoring T-72 and T-80 tanks and other military vehicle positions is vital. However, what is becoming more evident and consequential is the importance of monitoring the total numbers, positions and operations 24/7 of the Russian mobile crematoriums and trash incinerators located inside Ukraine and across national borders inside Russia wherever and whenever.

Follow the smoke.

** **Note:** This article is a composite of events and survivors' stories over 60-plus days of the war to best present a clear picture of the nature and scope of events. English is the second, third or fourth language of many of the survivors.*

Due to Russia cyberattacks from a number of government and military agencies, the names of individuals, places and information sources have been changed, redacted or omitted in the interest of protecting civilians due to stated Russian threats and aggression. {eo}

Steven V Selthoffer is a communications executive based in Germany. He has worked in humanitarian/relief aid for over 20 years with our NATO partners and has testified in joint U.S. Senate and Congressional OSCE hearings on relief aid, international relations and security.

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