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Dmytro Stus

VASYL STUS

Life in Creativity

Translated from the Ukrainian by Ludmila Bachurina

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Dedicated to all who keep the faith
against "objective" circumstances
The Author

Either the world will accept me as I am, as birthed by my mother, or it will kill me, destroy me. But I will not give up! And from every one of my moments, from every feeling and thought I will draw my portrait, that is, a portrait of the whole world …
Vasyl Stus

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Preliminary Remarks

Vasyl Stus.

Poet.

Human rights activist.

Man.

Friend. Husband. Father. Prisoner. Philosopher. Acquaintance. Beloved. Known and unknown. Politician and anti-politician at the same time. Alive and long dead—from the viewpoint of human life, but not in historical perspective.

Who are You? Why, for several decades after Your death, has Your figure been attracting attention, provoking resistance from some and true admiration from others? Why are You clambering up and falling down at the same time?

Why, despite such a significant interest in You, do the following words by Mykola Ryabchuk seem both so close to the truth and at the same time unrelated to Your texts: "*Vasyl Stus, demythologized by young critics, has much less of a chance of becoming a Ukrainian popular cultural hero than his mythologized populist hypostasis may suggest*"?[1]

And what made almost 100,000 people pour into the frosty streets of Kyiv on November 19, 1989, to pay their last respects to You, who had remained unknown even to many writers. (People have often confessed to me that they learned about Vasyl Stus on that day. But no famous person, as far as I know, dared to write about it).

For some reason, the *fate* of Vasyl Stus has strengthened with time and still serves as a litmus test of authenticity, proving once again that a person, against all odds, is still able to overcome fear and become worthy of his calling. I am sure that if the officials of the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee and KGB, who

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1 Mykola Riabchuk, "'Nebizh Rilke, syn Tarasa' (Vasyl Stus)," in *Heroi ta znamenytosti v ukrainskii kulturi*, ed. and compil. Oleksandr Hrytsenko (Kyiv: UTsKD, 1999), 231.

decided in 1972 to charge the poet, had realized that they were creating a national myth of the indomitable Ukrainian spirit, they would never have brought the case, which was completely made up and "tied" to the confrontation between Petro Shelest and Leonid Brezhnev,[2] to court.

But that's exactly what happened ...

At that time, the same Fate—combining the instinct of self-preservation and the desire for self-immolation, providence, and faith, everyday life and holiday—led Stus' parents to move from starving and despairing Rakhnivka to working Stalino. And the same Fate drove Vasyl from there to Kyiv, a city that repeatedly rejected him as a foreign body before honoring him as a hero after his death. Fate tested the poet in new ways and by new trials, but he, divining its commands, found in himself the strength and will to proudly accept the challenge. This is how the mystery of Vasyl Stus' life was created, according to whose internal logic, against all odds, he had to self-actualize to the very maximum, to "expend" himself. A constant readiness to maximally fill the moment of life, whatever the circumstances, makes it possible to speak today of the phenomenon of Vasyl Stus—a man, a poet, a husband, a father, a son, known and unknown, good and ...

Yet this book is not only about Vasyl Stus. After all, whoever he was, whatever he created of himself, his dependence on the socio-cultural and political conditions under which he happened to live was so great that to understand the true motives of the poet's actions, it would be necessary to encompass his social history. Then what could we say about Vasyl Stus, whose personality would thus be subordinated to the *"common, to social life, in all its concrete historical connections and indirectness"*?[3]

In some of his manifestations, this *"esthete, aristocrat, Westerner, this admirer of the esoteric Rilke and anyone hostile to what is*

2 For more details see Mikhail Kheifets, *Izbrannoe*, Vol. 3: *Ukrainskiie siluety. Voennoplennyi sekretar'* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2000), 26–28.

3 Dmitry Blagoi, "Problemy postroeniia nauchnoi biografii Pushkina," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vol. 16/18 (Moscow, 1934): 270. See also I. Ya. Losievskii, "Nauchnaia biografiia pisatelia: problemy interpretatsii i tipologii" (Kharkiv: Krok, 1998), 22.

'ours,' this foreign spirit"[4] paradoxically proved much closer to the established tradition of subordinating the Ukrainian artist to the pains and problems of his people than to any high aesthetic detachment from political discourse (the latter, however, does occupy an extremely important place in Stus' poetic world). The poet voluntarily consigned the Word to the struggle for the preservation of Ukraine's national dignity and tradition. *"If life were better, I would not write poetry, but would work on the land,"*[5] he wrote in the preface to the collection *Zymovi Dereva* (*Winter Trees*). And this was not a pose. It was rather a conscious choice and the expression of a readiness to form part of a great national tree.[6]

In these circumstances, the trends and tendencies of literary fashion, which occupy an important place in the formal aspect of the poet's work, are always assigned a secondary, subordinate function.[7] *"The main thing is not to betray the truth of life,"* Vasyl Stus used to say.

4 Riabchuk, "'Nebizh Rilke, syn Tarasa' (Vasyl Stus)," 232.

5 Vasyl Stus, "Dvoie sliv chytachevi," in his *Tvory*, 4 vols, 6 books (Lviv: Prosvita, 1994–1999), Vol. 1, Book 1: 42.

6 It is with the living tree that the poet most often associated the nation, the people, and tradition. See, in particular, his programmatic works: *The Broken Evening Branch Is Swaying...*, *We Are Circling Around the Trunk...*, etc.

7 In a way this confirms the formation of the traditional, rather than modern, discourse around Stus' work. See, in particular, "'Stusivs'ki chytannia'," *Slovo i chas*, No. 7 (1998): 17–28 (papers by Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska, Yevhen Sverstiuk, Eleonora Solovei, and Mykhailo Naienko; No. 8 (1998): 62–70 (papers by Mykola Bondar, Halyna Burlaka, Mykola Kodak, Viktoriia Plaksina, and Dmytro Stus); as well as the following articles: Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska, "Poet," in Vasyl Stus, *Tvory*, Vol. 1, Book 1: 7–38; Kotsiubynska, "Fenomen Stusa," *Suchasnist'*, No. 9 (1991): 26–35; Mykola Zhulynsky, "Vasyl Stus, 1938–1985," *Literaturna Ukraina*, April 19, 1990; Yuri Shevelyov, "Trunok i trutyzna: Pro *Palimpsesty* Vasylia Stusa," *Vasyl Stus u zhytti, tvorchosti, spohadakh ta otsinkakh suchasnykiv*, compil. and ed. Osyp Zinkevych and Mykola Frantsuzhenko (Baltimore and Toronto: Smoloskyp, 1987), 368–401, etc. All of these authors in one way or another comprehend the figure of Vasyl Stus primarily in the traditional Ukrainian context, barely indicating a direction of possible intertextual and comparative studies. They are opposed by a small group of researchers of a more modern cast, as it were, whose texts are mostly collected in the book *Stus yak tekst*, ed. Marko Pavlyshyn (Melburn: Department of Slavic Studies, Monash University, 1992) (articles by Tamara Hundorova, "Fenomen Stusovoho 'zhertvoslova'," pp 1–29, and Marko Pavlyshyn, "Kvadratura kruha: prolehomeny do otsinky Vasylia Stusa," 31–52). The figure and works of Vasyl Stus are perceived through a largely non-traditional discourse in the articles by

Given this choice (today is the pathetic cliché is that of "serving the interests of the people"), it is not surprising that Vasyl Stus entered the history of Ukrainian literature and culture not thanks to his poems, but, as it were, only with their substantial support. And when, in the mid-1970s, his poems, as insightfully recited by Nadiia Svitlychna, started to be heard quite often on Radio Liberty, behind them there was the image of a fighter against the system, a man who for many listeners was an example of inviolability.

In this way, complementing and opposing each other, the works and biography of Vasyl Stus continue to exist today. The writer, whose works organically combine elements of populism, and of the modern and postmodern,[8] in real life appears to be a post-sixtier,[9] a dissident who, "*guided by personal responsibility ... for the fate of the whole nation,*" decided that it was not only possible but necessary "*to oppose the authorities' violence by adopting a position of civil disobedience.*"[10] Strict adherence to this position through his whole life paradoxically brought him closer to and, at the same time, distanced him from the sixtiers' movement and its ideas. Vasyl Stus was well aware that his path guaranteed neither career success nor material benefits. It was a path to nowhere; nevertheless, he recklessly offered himself for the defense of national and human dignity: "*Fate has given me a sign – I bravely follow its call. For I want to be worthy of the native people, who will be born tomorrow, having thrown off the shame of age-old languishing. And in that nation, I will achieve immortality!*"[11]

To follow this path with dignity, it was necessary not only to learn to endure moral and physical torture and humiliation, to multiply the copies of his works, which were destroyed by civil servants at the first opportunity; it was necessary not just to harden and

Vasyl Ivashko, "Mif pro Vasylia Stusa yak dzerkalo shistdesiatnykiv," *Svitovyd*, No. 3 (1994): 104–120; Kost Moskalets, "Strasti po Vitchyzni: Lyst do mandrivnyka na Skhid," in his *Liudyna na kryzhyni* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 1999), 209–254.

8 See Mykhailo Naienko, "Vystup na pershykh Stusivs'kykh chytanniakh," *Slovo i Chas*, No. 6 (1998): 26–28; Dmytro Stus, "*Palimpsesty* Vasylia Stusa: tvorcha istoriia ta problema tekstu," in Vasyl Stus, *Tvory*, Vol. 3, Book 1: 13.

9 Naienko, "Vystup na pershykh Stusivs'kykh chytanniakh", 28.

10 Vasyl Stus, "Holos z Ukrainy," in his *Tvory*, Vol. 4: 482.

11 Idem, "Lyst do druziv vid 30.07.1978," ibid., 468.

accept separation from family and friends; but also to create an inner world that would allow him to feel confidence and not despair under any circumstances. Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska describes this as "*self-exploration.*" a quote (or is it a term?) borrowed from Vasyl Stus himself.[12]

The ability to balance the demands of his inner world and his actions – "with/without dignity" – at a sky-high height, in the historical conditions of the second half of the twentieth century, allowed the poet to withstand all the trials that befell him.

How was his inner world formed, out of which not only poems and works, but – perhaps even more significantly – Stus' style of life grew, a style described by the poet's contemporaries as an inability to pass by someone else in pain and despair?

It would seem that it is this openness to pain and suffering that makes the poet's figure either all-admirable or all-repulsive: no one is indifferent – there is either full recognition and esteem or else utter rejection and denial of this way of life. Given such polarization, it seems possible to see Vasyl Stus' personality at the intersection of those lines of force that transform a man of the crowd (an ordinary man) into a "*man with a biography.*" In this regard, Yuri Lotman says that "*not everyone who lives in this society has the right to a biography.*" After all, each type of culture "*forms its own models of 'people with biographies' and 'people without biographies' ... each culture creates in its ideal model a type of person whose behavior is entirely determined by the system of cultural codes and a person who has a certain freedom of choice for his* ***own*** *behavior model.*"[13]

A striking biography is always a "breaking out" of the ordinary, a violation of given canons, the creation of one's own honor code, and atypical behavioral conduct, recognized to be socially significant to the extent that the latter serves as an example for other people to define their life strategies. The creation and formation of a person with a proud and independent profile is a much more

12 Mykhailyna Kotsiubynska, "Stusove 'samosoboiunapovnennia' (iz rozdumiv nad poeziieiu Vasylia Stusa)," *Suchasnist'*, No. 6 (1995): 137–144.

13 Yurii Lotman, "Literaturnaia biografiia v istoriko-kul'turnom kontekste," *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo universiteta: Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii*, No. 683 (1986): 106.

complicated affair than any literary work. After all, literature is, in the first place, an attempt to comprehend the world by artistic means. Instead, life creation is the creation of oneself, one's destiny, and thus the world around oneself. And this struggle of the individual to have the right to -actualize, in some cases, actually affects the existing state of society, causing a greater or lesser reaction (transformation, modification) of the latter. And here, in this preface, we use lofty words, but only by using such high registers of contradiction can we speak about Vasyl Stus.

The poet's inner desire for self-actualization naturally coincided with the clear fixation by the Soviet and Ukrainian intelligentsia, in the first decades of the postwar period, on the philosophical ideas of existentialism, which were perceived by many unbelieving intellectuals as the only possible alternative to the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism.

Only a few people were lucky enough to buy, in the original, the theoretical works even of those authors relatively loyal to the USSR, like Karl Jaspers, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus (translations were not even contemplated). Therefore, the fundamental understanding of this philosophical trend was formed by "husking" the grains of meaning from the groundless criticism of the existentialists by Marxist philosophers. Admittedly, this did not provide the opportunity to form a clear idea of existentialism as a philosophical trend; instead, it allowed anyone interested to add his own individual ideas about what existentialism might be. And the fact that existentialism proclaimed human individuality as the highest value, and connected the existence of the world with everyone's self-actualization, made this philosophical doctrine the most influential in the formation of not only the young Vasyl Stus but of many people who entered upon life in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

To a certain extent, it was his imagined and individually supplemented existentialism that helped Vasyl Stus start a concentrated effort to create an inner, real self, one of whom he would not be ashamed. In addition, the idea of living every day "on the edge," between life and death, "at the maximum," was very close to Stus' psychological type. That is why the poet finally managed to rid

himself of the dominating influence of existentialist ideas only in the early 1970s. As Ivan Dziuba rightly remarks, Vasyl Stus outgrows his existential worldview, opening it *"into experiencing the fate of his people and belonging to them, into a feat for them."*[14]

The process of the formation of Vasyl Stus' personality actually finished on the eve of his arrest in 1972. The rest was simple and clear. Only one thing remained unclear: will you, Vasyl Stus, like millions of your predecessors, be able to pay the inhuman price? A decade-long fee for the right to be the one he wished, to complement the unfolding horizontal with a rapidly growing vertical.

Working on this book, I often caught myself thinking that the poet felt his destiny too early, and some of his actions before 1972 strangely resonated with the future. Having no rational explanation for this temporal rupture ("nonlinearity"), I decided to start the book with his reburial, when Vasyl Stus returned to Ukraine both as a creator and as a man with a biography. This was the beginning of his "life after death," the point that drew attention to his figure in his homeland. For him, this meant achieving absolute success, because all his life he sought to be interesting to his people.

I hope that *Vasyl Stus: Life in Creativity* will be only the first attempt to comprehend the mystery of Vasyl Stus' life. And that more thorough and interesting works in this direction will appear after its release. I have simply tried to collect and systematize what I regard as the most important material. And if it helps someone open the "door" to the secret of the life and work of Vasyl Stus, then my ten-year labor is not in vain.

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[14] Ivan Dziuba, "Rizbiar vlasnoho dukhu," in Vasyl Stus, *Pid tiaharem khresta: Poezii* (Lviv: Kameniar, 1991), 19–20.

Life after Death: Reburial and Struggle for Heritage (Year 1989)

Every star has its time – to rise and to go down ...
Vasyl Stus

He had to return. Not to Rakhnivka, which suffered for hundreds of humiliating years, not even to Yuzivka–Stalino–Donetsk, under its skies swiftly filling with the smoke from gob piles, but to a city as hostile to strangers as Kyiv. This city still had to bow to us, the Ukrainians. And it did not matter that after the funeral of Lesia Ukrainka in July 1913,[1] it showed respect and fear only to the military forces of the Whites-Reds-Browns-Reds-Again, or filed to deceitfully bow in proudly flunkyish columns of demonstrations, thousands of people strong, selected and controlled by the KGB and MVD. We are coming back. So, you, flattering and ugly frog of internationalism, still have to bow to the nationalists: Yurii Lytvyn, Oleksa Tykhy, and Vasyl Stus ...

* * *

November 1989. Borisovo. Here and there in the cemetery there were markers without surnames. The world seemed to stop. I perceived only untrodden virgin snow, and divined rather than saw a seldom beaten path, which seemed to record the traces of a crime – infrequent visits to still fresh graves, filled by the newly deceased prisoners from the nearby prisons of the Perm region and tended by those providing services for the political camps VS-389/36 (strict and special regime units). It was not surprising. They were well paid. Unlike the criminal camps it was a quiet job and you could let

1 For more details about Lesia Ukrainka's burial, attended by thousands of people, see M. O. Moroz, *Litopys zhyttia ta tvorchosti Lesi Ukrainky* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1992), 514–515.

it slide that a significant number of the detainees did not show proper respect to the staff: money, as you know, does not smell.

For some reason, it was here, in the cemetery, as Slavko Chernilevsky (the director of the film *Vasyl Stus: The Road of Thorns*) too anxiously asked to wait to film the "historic" moment of my approach to the grave, that for the first time since my father's death my eyes filled with tears and my frame was racked by the dry spasms of internal sobbing. Taking my hat off my head, I tried to hide this unmanly moment, but the cameraman, Bohdan Pidhirny, had already set up the camera and followed me through the deep cemetery snow, forcing me to hasten into the forest to avoid his capturing my tear-stained face.

None of us knew for sure what would happen in a few hours, whether we would have to go on a hunger strike, as agreed with Oleh Pokalchuk, to gain permission to rebury Vasyl Stus and Yurii Lytvyn in Ukraine. I had to stay in the cemetery, and Oleh had to go to Chusovoy, suffering the first police blows. This thought flashed in my mind but did nothing to contain either the sobs or the tears.

Having jumped over the fence, I almost hid in the woods, leaving the indignant Bohdan with nothing. He could not follow with an old camera in his hands, realizing that any similar movement could harm the equipment, which would mean no chronicle.

After a while, after approaching the already familiar marker bearing a can on which the humiliating number "9" was carved, I was still not able immediately to soothe the internal spasm. But doing so strangely gave me confidence that everything would be fine.

"We will not go on a hunger strike," I told Oleh. "I will only go away with my dad."

He was not surprised, still being under the influence of nightly Bible readings. He, I and ... a mystical voice that sounded so distinctly that Oleh almost physically felt the presence of someone else with us.

"Strangely, I'm talking to my father," I told him.

And it was not important whether he believed me then or attributed my strange behavior to the considerable nervousness of a 23-year-old man, but he and I still remember the festive atmosphere

of the Chusovoy hostel, which in the morning was filled with a pure disembodied calm and a readiness for everything. I have not felt anything like this before or since. It is likely through such an experience that monks bring themselves closer to the pure service of God, taming the flesh and tempering the spirit. It was easier for us (me?) as, other than Vasyl Stus, our spirits were tempered by the deaths of thousands of fighters against the Soviet regime and the millions of its wordless victims, who went to Perm, in particular, with obedient as sheep, hoping for incredible things. Someone had to be the first, to become a symbol of victory at least over forgetfulness, the myth of the indomitability of the Ukrainian spirit. And these were the first: Volodymyr Shovkoshytny, Vasyl Ovsienko, Stanislav Chernilevsky, Oleh Pokalchuk, Bohdan Pidhirny, Vasyl Hurdzan, Valerii Pavlov, Serhii Vachi, Volodymyr and Mykola Tykhy, the Perm/Chusovoy poet Yurii Belikov, the director of the Ogonyok ("Flicker") international mountain skiing center Leonard Postnikov, as well as dozens of other people who happened to be next to us, instead of in safety, having stepping aside, helped by the necessary acquaintance, advice or even by an almost illegal action. In particular, the driver of our truck, the father of six children, Valeryi Sidorov, drove the Ural off-road almost six hundred kilometers, having two flat tires, to pick up the bodies of Lytvyn and Stus. Police officers, on Moscow's orders, vilely accused him of killing a boy because it was necessary to somehow disrupt the reburial. But our determination and that of thousands of Kyivites was so obvious that even the regime gave in and the "all clear" came from both Kyiv and Moscow.

* * *

I had dreamed of reburial for four years, since the death of Vasyl Stus on the night of September 3/4, 1985.[2] However, when my

[2] All documents indicate the night of September 4 to 5, or simply September 4. However, after collecting a large number of testimonies and recollections, I think we can say that Vasyl Stus died on the night of September 3/4. And the next night, as Vasyl Ovsiienko writes in his memoirs, the body of Vasyl Stus was taken out of the dungeon in a "villainous" way.

mother, her sister Shura (Oleksandra Loveiko) and I, together with a close friend of our family, Margarita Dovhan, flew to Perm (via Moscow, because they had to pick me up, a member of a construction battalion, who had returned to his unit only a few days after surgery in Ivanovo), we could do nothing but stand over the grave on our arrival at the settlement of Kuchino.

"Cho zh vy tak dolga yekhali?" ("Why did it take you so long to get here?" [Russian]), Major Dolmatov asked my mother, glad that I was wearing a soldier's uniform and that the military commandant's office could be used on the first unpleasant occasions.

"I sent you a telegram, I asked you to wait, I...," Valentina Popelyukh[3] desperately whispered rather than said.

"Vy shto, nie panimaietie, shto schas nie zima, tieplo, tielo nachinaiet razlagatstsa. A khaladilnikav u nas nietu" ("Don't you realize that it is not winter? It is warm and the body is decomposing. And we have no refrigerators" [Russian]), another officer gave evidence of his care ...

"Killers,": the word just flew out of my mother's mouth, and we traveled the 10 kilometres to the village of Borisovo, where a freshly dug grave was located on its edge just near the swamp.

"Vot yesli by vy vchiera priiekhali... ("If you had come yesterday ..." [Russian]), a man in a civilian jacket stated ...

"I beg you, step away, let us be alone," my mother said with a restraint she could barely muster to the contented and frightened faces of the KGB officers. And we were left at the grave alone with them watching us only 20–50 steps away.

I felt a strange bitter taste in my mouth and the need to become a kind of support to my mother. She stooped to the lumps of a foreign land, which now put pressure on the chest of her husband Vasyl Stus, an obscure poet in Ukraine, whose stubborn letters had convinced her that they already belonged to history.

This black cross of women crucified on the grave made me promise to myself that the body of my dad, to whom we were not even allowed to say goodbye, would be pulled out of this almost eternal frozen earth. It was in April 1981 that we saw Vasyl Stus

[3] Valentyna Popelyukh (born 1938) was Vasyl Stus' wife.

alive for the last time.[4] Three years later, in 1984, we came to my father, but he would not consent to the "pre-rendezvous" humiliation and refused to meet. This was understandable ... But how could I forgive my mother's bitter tears, welling in her eyes along the jolting road on our way back from Kuchino camp to Chusovoy?

However, after my father's death, I had first to try to return Vasyl Stus' personal belongings and his manuscripts. In one of the letters that disappeared from our apartment during an unauthorized search, my father wrote that he was at work on a collection of poems and translations titled *The Bird of the Soul*. However, my mother's requests were not met.

"Poslie neabkhadimai pravierki lichnyie vieshchi vam vyshliut" ("Personal belongings will be sent to you on completion of the necessary check" [Russian]).

I could not obtain any other answer, and after returning from the construction battalion, I primarily concerned myself with this unreturned blue notebook containing Goethe, Rilke, Rimbaud and other "anti-Soviet" people whose works undermined the Soviet system. At that time, reburial seemed less important to me than the return of this inheritance, but the accelerating process of the USSR's partial disintegration and decentralization brought political issues to the forefront. The reburial, which seemed unlikely to happen only a year earlier, suddenly became a real prospect, and the newly created Galfilm studio's interest in making a film meant that it would tackle a lot of the organizational problems that were too complicated for a 23-year-old man.

So, when after a long correspondence the necessary permission from the Chusovsky district authorities was obtained, Vasyl

[4] Paradoxically, in this very Chusovoy, whose river runs along lands made tragic by the fate of thousands and thousands of Ukrainians, from time to time frightening the eye with a glimpse of white (earth? bones?). The director of the Ogonyok Olympic mountain skiing center, Leonard Postnikov, opened a museum of the Chusovaya river. His first exhibits were the Ermak Chapel saved by Postnikov and a large memorial stone, the first monument to the victims of repression in the USSR. It was in 1981 that Vasyl Stus was still alive and had just arrived at VS-389/36, located at a distance of 40 km from Postnikov's future museum.

Gurdzan actively proceeded with collecting documents and permits for the transportation of Yurii Lytvyn's ashes. Volodymyr Tykhy did the same for his father Oleksa.

Reburials were originally planned for August 1989, but a telegram arrived the day before their departure about the dangerous epidemiological situation in the Perm region and a prohibition on exhumation. There was nothing for it but to postpone the reburial, and the shooting team had anyway flown to the Urals to film material about the already half-ruined camp:[5] the Soviet authorities were actively destroying the Gulag sites to hide at least in this way their crimes' locations and the machinery of their commission. The Soviet and fascist systems are very similar in this and many other respects: in 1944–1945, the SS men also destroyed death camps, driving the emaciated, nearly transparent skeletons of once healthy people and killing the exhausted by the side of the road.

"On August 24, I was already in Perm," the film director Volodymyr Shovkoshytny recalls. *"Being the director of the film* Vasyl Stus: The Road of Thorns, *I was due to organize the reburial of the mortal remains of V. Stus, Y. Lytvyn, and O. Tykhy and, of course, to ensure the work of the film crew.*

There was no reason to worry about it. As late as June 15, Dmytro Stus, the poet's son, received an official response from the head of the multi-branch production association of housing and communal services (MPO ZhKKh) of the Chusovoy City Executive Committee of the Perm region, V. V. Kazantsev. ***It said: "In response to your application, MPO ZhKKh informs you that the permission for the reburial of the citizen Stus V. S. has been granted. Transportation of the remains is due to be performed in a zinc coffin. The necessary documents for exhumation and transportation of the remains will be issued upon your arrival in the town of Chusovoy."***[6]

Albeit with a slight delay, the same documents were received for Yurii Lytvyn. The necessary documents for the reburial of

5 Mart Niklus, who managed to visit the site with Estonian TV, which was making a film about him, repeatedly mentioned this in his letters to me and Vasyl Ovsienko.

6 Volodymyr Shovkoshytny, "'Narode mii, do tebe ya shche vernu…'," *Ukraina*, No. 4 (1990): 7. The telegram is stored by the family in Vasyl Stus' archive.

Oleksa Tykhy were not prepared in time.[7] There was an agreement for the reburial of Vasyl Stus and Oleksa Tykhy at the Lisove Cemetery. I didn't even think of the Baikove Cemetery: we would just be happy with reburial being allowed, and thankful for that.

The year of the reburial turned out to be too ambiguous. The vast majority of people were still caught in a web of fear and uncertainty. Society was still dominated by the belief that "perestroika" was initiated only to identify the newest freedom volunteers and to reap another bloody harvest. The intelligentsia grew more convinced that the regime did not have its former strength and character, but still continued to monitor events with fear, not daring open opposition.

The ideologues of the party system continued to take measures to "strengthen the international and patriotic education of the population," and the regime's newspaper *Pravda* published a summary of the CPSU Central Committee resolutions *"on additional measures to restore justice to victims of repression of the 1930s, 40s and early 50s. The Central Committee decided to submit for the consideration of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR a proposal for a legislative act to nullify the out-of-court decisions of "troikas" [three-member extrajudicial bodies that passed sentences during the Great Terror of 1937–1938] and "special" councils; and to consider all citizens who were repressed by the decisions of the specified bodies rehabilitated. This measure does not apply to traitors and punitive expeditioners of the Great Patriotic War period, Nazi criminals, etc."*[8]

Fighters of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) were considered traitors to the homeland. And the freedom volunteers and independence fighters of the 1960–1980s were not mentioned at all: the time had not yet come.

7 Shovkoshytny's statement in the above-mentioned article that the documents concerning Oleksa Tykhy were prepared is not correct. Their collection started in the last weeks before departure but not all the permits were obtained from the authorities. Had the reburial had taken place at that time, Oleksa Tykhy's ashes would most likely not have been transported.

8 V. F. Verstiuk, O. M. Dziuba, and V. F. Repryntsev, *Ukraina vid naidavnishykh chasiv do siohodennia: Khronolohichnyi dovidnyk* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1995), 634–635.

However, the events of that year were accelerating with incredible speed. On February 11, 1989, the constituent conference of the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society took place. That same year the withdrawal of Soviet troops from long-suffering Afghanistan finished and the media started a fraught debate on the draft program of the People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction (i.e., Perestroika),[9] which involved the head of the ideological department of the CPU Central Committee, the future first President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk. Although the latter defeated his not very courageous opponents with communist rhetoric, he objectively helped (*At least one can talk to him! And they show it on TV! And one isn't imprisoned for that, at least not right away!*) to overcome the panic fear of the USSR's state repressive machine.

At the same time, the government continued to conceal the truth about the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Many looked at the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh with fear and hope for the eventual collapse of the Union. And it gradually turned into a banal massacre of civilians by the warring sides.

Society, divided into small interest groups, gathered in smoky kitchens. Closing the door tightly, turning on the water and covering the phone with a pillow (the simplest, though not very reliable protection against eavesdropping and interception), activists of newly formed public organizations as well as people simply involved in the recent repressions had intellectual conversations. Society was buzzing with excitement and the air seemed to thicken to such an extent that something was bound to happen. But what would it be?

However, this regards the, so to speak, "safe" official Ukrainian intelligentsia. There were also many Ukrainians who had returned from the camps and were actively involved in the process of legalizing the national political life of the republic. Thus, back in 1987, the Ukrainian Cultural Club (UCC) was established, which for a time held its meetings in the Rovesnyk ("Age Mate") club and was then the largest organized Ukrainian opposition structure in

[9] Ibid., 636–637.

Kyiv, and perhaps in the entire Ukrainian SSR. It was in the UCC that a core of active oppositionists was formed which included those who, quite in the spirit of the time, were active in the field of cultural studies. However, unlike official culture scholars (who, taking advantage of the moment, actively started filling in the "blank spots" of the Ukrainian literature of the Executed Renaissance period), Serhiy Naboka, Yevhen Sverstiuk, and other UCC members focused on the work of writers imprisoned or displaced from official creative life in the 1960s. After one of these meetings, which took place in early 1988, and was dedicated to the work of Vasyl Stus, the head of the ideological department of the CPU Central Committee, Leonid Kravchuk, directed that the Club be deprived of the right to hold its meetings in large halls, in which, despite the natural fear, a lot of people had always gathered.

At the beginning of 1988, the Ukrainian Group to Promote the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords was transformed into the Ukrainian Helsinki Union[10] (UHU), and the UCC joined it as a collective member.

The struggle of the Crimean Tatars for a return to their historical homeland also indirectly but significantly fueled the political situation in the republic. In July 1987, initiative groups in Uzbekistan alone collected about thirty thousand signatures under the text of the "Nationwide Appeal of the Crimean Tatars to M. S. Gorbachev."[11] They were supported by such iconic figures of Soviet culture as Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Bulat Okudzhava, Vladimir Dudintsev, and others.[12] For a number of reasons, this struggle did not find direct support among Ukrainians, who paid little attention to the problems of other peoples of the USSR and tended to focus

[10] Ibid., 628.

[11] Ibid., 626.

[12] Despite all the protests and appeals, on December 4, 1987, the USSR Council of Ministers passed a resolution "On restricting the registration of Crimean Tatars in a number of settlements of the Crimean Oblast and the Krasnodar Krai." See ibid., 627.

on the struggle against narrowing the sphere of use of the Ukrainian language.[13]

In Galicia in the late 1980s, there was a struggle for the legalization of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which was forced to go underground after the war. In November 1987, the Committee for the Defense of the Ukrainian Catholic Church was established in Lviv, headed by the long-term political prisoner and priest Ivan Hel.[14]

Such initial structuring of the national life, carried out by small groups of active citizens, took place in other republics as well. The leading role was played by people in the Baltic republics. The memory of their independent existence as national states had not been completely erased from their historical consciousness. In the midst of all these events, no one paid much attention to the increasingly noticeable pairing of the ideological education of Komsomol leaders with an economic one, embodied by the opening of the International Institute of Management in August 1989 in Kyiv.

1989 was to be a turning point, after which the Soviet government would either brutally crush the sprouts of new life, or the energy of the hatred accumulated during decades of fear would make social change irreversible. Mikhail Gorbachev used to repeat that "the process is already under way and there is no return to the past." However, the second component of this statement had yet to be proved.

The main event of 1989 was the first and last democratic election in the history of the USSR held on March 26. An important event of the election campaign was the inaugural conference of the Memorial Ukrainian Historical and Educational Society, which took place on March 4 at the Republican Cinema House. Wives,

[13] In particular, it is worth mentioning Oles Honchar's resonant letter to the Secretary General of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Gorbachev, in which he expressed his concern about the narrowing of the sphere of use of Ukrainian and made proposals aimed at surmounting the shortcomings of the national and cultural policy of the USSR. It is also impossible to ignore Ivan Dziuba's series of articles, *Because It's Not Just Language, Sounds...*, which earned him the Taras Shevchenko State Prize in 1990.

[14] Verstiuk, Dziuba, and Repryntsev, *Ukraina vid naidavnishykh chasiv do siohodennia*, 627.

mothers and children of Valerii Marchenko, Vasyl Stus, Ivan Svitlychny, Oleksa Tykhy, Yuriy Lytvyn and other recent political prisoners who had either died in the camps or lost their health and ability to work there (like Ivan Svitlychny). During the break between meetings, an improvised information exhibition was held, the whose main purpose was to break the information blockade artificially imposed by the authorities on these names.

Although the act seemed quite illegal, the majority of the conference delegates still found the courage to read the materials that women hung on their persons (it was strictly forbidden by the directorate to hang anything on the walls).

This conference also showed the significant diversity in the perception of social processes (national, ideological,[15] tactical and strategic) by former convicts, which later led to the fragmentation and even mutual hostility of the once fellow prisoners.

Under the pressure of undeniable facts and evidence that did not threaten the then top Soviet and party leaders with direct discredit, the ban on the publication of crimes by the Soviet regime was raised, and on April 16, 1987 the official newspaper *Pravda Ukrainy* published the report of the Government-sponsored commission formed to study the circumstances and documents associated with the mass burial of Soviet citizens in the 19th quarter of

[15] Many of the debates at this conference were devoted to discussing such a seemingly insignificant terminological problem as what word should be used to describe the ideology of the repressions of the 1930s: *stalinizm* or *stalinshchyna*. Behind all this was the unwillingness of society to admit that the conveyor belt of death was not due so much the arbitrariness of one person (*stalinizm*) but fundamental to the basis of the existence and development of the state (*stalinshchyna*). In this context, they did not want to mention Lenin's name, which still remained beyond criticism, at least in public conversations and debates, or to focus on those repressed in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the persons repressed in those years were active participants in the founding congress, they were forced to accept the rules of the game proposed by the Central Committee and the KGB if they had any hope of public attention and mass media coverage. Information about the creation of the Memorial Society appeared in the official press, although it was significantly edited by censors.

the Dnipro forestry in Kyiv near Bykivnia. The commission's conclusions confirmed that mass executions had been carried out in this location by the NKVD in 1937–1941.[16]

However, the facts of the artificial famine in Ukraine and the closely connected movement of the Ukrainian sixtiers[17] continued to be concealed at the official level.

On July 1, 1989, the constituent conference of the People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction[18] took place in Kyiv, and marked a fundamentally new stage in the government's confrontation with the people. Viacheslav Chornovil, who was actively supported by the Ukrainian poet Ivan Drach, and many other representatives of both the official and oppositional Ukrainian intelligentsia, should be recognized as the leader and main driving force of this process.

16 See *Pravda Ukrainy*, April 16, 1989.

17 In his study *Soviet Ukrainian Dissent*, Jaroslaw Bilocerkowycz provides interesting statistics of the social structure of the Ukrainian resistance movement in the second half of the 20th century: 58.9% of the dissidents, according to the researcher's incomplete and selective data, were from the peasantry; 30.4%, from the intelligentsia; 10.7%, were workers. For more details, see Jaroslaw Bilocerkowycz, *Soviet Ukrainian Dissent: A Study of Political Alienation* (Boulder and London: Westview, 1988), 67–68; see also Heorhii Kasyanov, *Nezhodni: Ukrains'ka intelihentsiia v rusi oporu 1960–80-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid', 1995), 190. Yet allow me to disagree with these eloquent figures (to my knowledge objective data is not available). Based on my personal communication with different people from these segments, at least 2/3 of those called "intellectuals" by Bilocerkowycz and Kasianov were of peasant origin, because the absolute majority of them belonged to the first (and not even the second) generation of the intelligentsia and, therefore, had no support from influential parents, friends, etc. Indirectly, the lack of such support and advice "helped" them find themselves behind bars in the KGB pre-trial detention facilities without any hope of escaping by great or small compromises with the authorities. Without an influential public "rearguard," those "peasants," who through great efforts made their way to the capital, had either to repent atrociously and sling the maximum amount of mud at their fellows or endure the maximum term of imprisonment. A smaller part of the "intelligentsia" consisted mainly of Russified dissidents of Jewish descent, who, although united with the Ukrainians by their struggle against the regime, defended not so much national as universal democratic values. These groups differed culturally and mentally to a large extent but were on mostly friendly terms.

18 Verstiuk, Dziuba, and Repryntsev, *Ukraina vid naidavnishykh chasiv do siohodennia*, 640.

The name of Ivan Drach was notably repeated the most, as his resilience and steadfastness attracted the general attention. In the public mind, this was primarily due to the serious illness of his son, who was exposed to excessive radiation working as a doctor in the Chernobyl zone.

It is not surprising that Ivan Drach became the first leader of the People's Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction (Rukh), whose constituent congress took place on September 8–10, 1989.[19] The hot summer of 1989 saw televised debates between Kravchuk, Drach, Popovych, and other initiators of the creation of this national public organization. There were also frequent meetings between the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Nikolai Ryzhkov and representatives of the Donbas strike committees, as well as the consistent and constant demands, less noticeable in the Ukrainian environment, by the Crimean Tatars to return to their homeland.[20]

Add to this the numerous rallies that took place almost every day and it was clear that the authorities were gradually losing authority over a hitherto controlled society and openly feared the reburial of people whose very names were banned.

At the same time, there was a confrontation at the top: on the one hand, the TV debates between Leonid Kravchuk—Ivan Drach—Myroslav Popovych seemed to mark the moral defeat of the latter two; and, on the other hand, the very fact of such public televised debates was a remarkable achievement in the overcoming of seventy years of fear of the system. At the same time, letters condemning Leonid Kravchuk's behavior were sent for internal review to the ideological departments of the CPSU at the local level. Kravchuk was opposed by Volodymyr Ivashko, whom the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CC

19 Verstiuk, Dziuba, and Repryntsev, *Ukraina vid naidavnishykh chasiv do siohodennia*, 642 At that time, the first recordings of Taras Petrynenko's song appeared. It contained the line: "even the birth of a child requires movement" (*rukh*).

20 Despite the persecution and strict ban on the return of Crimean Tatars by police in Crimea, there was no concealing the obvious fact: contrary to official policy, Crimean Tatars were returning home. On July 7, 1989, the first issue of the Crimean Tatar *Dostluk* (*Friendship*) weekly supplement to the official newspaper *Krymskaia pravda* (*Crimean Truth*) was published in Simferopol, which was a first small victory.

CPU) on September 28, 1989, elected First Secretary of the CC CPU.[21] Ivashko replaced the seriously ill Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, under whose "reign" the reburial of Vasyl Stus was impossible.[22]

Ramifying tendencies in the country intensified: constant rallies in the Baltic republics turned into armed confrontation with the authorities, bloody conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, a volcano of emotions in Crimea and Lviv. Such gradually laid the groundwork for the idea of reburial. And it was clear to all involved that this idea would become a national rather than family affair: both the authorities and Vasyl Stus' relatives lost the chance to keep reburial as an intimate family affair.

Since mid-1989, the direct pressure of the KGB on the family had also relaxed: the authorities temporarily acknowledged their defeat to conceal their ugly faces in the new era and the new states.

The events connected with politics and the reburial created a kind of power-psychological vacuum in which some could no longer prevent, while others did not yet have the audacity to act with confident responsibility in the absence of permission. Eventually, all meant that the burial, which was planned for August 1989, did not take place.

At the end of the summer, only a film crew went to Perm to film the hastily destroyed VS-389/36 camp, where Vasyl Stus' life journey was cut off.

The film crew, which was expected by Volodymyr Shovkoshytny in Perm, arrived there on August 28. From August 29 to September 1,[23] the camp was filmed in consultation with Vasyl Ovsienko, a former prisoner who had been held in the same ward as Vasyl Stus for several months.

At such a time we had to be limited to this.

21 Verstiuk, Dziuba, and Repryntsev, *Ukraina vid naidavnishykh chasiv do siohodennia*, 643.

22 I suspect the real reason for Volodymyr Shcherbytsky's personal (according to "informed" sources) hatred of Stus will not be known for a very long time. In any event, no official documents revealing his "direct" interference in the fate of Vasyl Stus have been found. However, at the level of "unofficial" conversations, there is much indirect evidence that, in 1972, Stus was convicted on the instructions of Shcherbytsky or of someone acting on his behalf.

23 Shovkoshytny, "'Narode mii, do tebe ya shche vernu…'," 7

The tension continued to rise into October.

I was then convinced that reburial was a secondary matter. The main thing was to return my father's last collection *Bird of the Soul*, written during his second imprisonment, from exile. However, no results were gained through the correspondence carried out with the support of Henrikh Dvorko. Yet the original wording of the answer—"*all materials were destroyed after death*"—was softened after my strong reply and gave me some hope. However, the Writers' Union, the general situation, and the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, which had not yet been transformed into a political party, proved to be the catalyst that changed priorities: when an opportunity for reburial arises, it should be seized.

Slavko Chernilevsky[24] and I decided to depart in mid-November. A second official permit was obtained. Only confrontation in the press was cause for concern. It was in 1989 that the thick veil of silence around the name of Vasyl Stus was torn. *Prapor* (*Banner*), *Literaturna Ukraina* (*Literary Ukraine*), *Molod' Ukrainy* (*Youth of Ukraine*), *Ukraina, Literaturnaya Rossiya* (*Literary Russia*), *Zhovten'* (*October*), and *Kyiv* published small selections of poems with different commentary, which, despite the ugly preface-afterword, seemed to insistently introduce the name of Vasyl Stus into the Ukrainian literary context.[25]

24 Stanislav Chernilevsky was a director of the three-part documentary film *Black Candle of the Enlightened Road*. Together with Volodynyr Shovkoshytny he did the bulk of the organizational work on reburial.

25 The first materials appeared in the newspaper *Literaturna Ukraina* accompanied by a long and irresolute article of Mykola Zhulinsky, director of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Ukrainian SSR (see his *Iz zabuttia – v bezsmertia (Storinky pryzabutoi spadshchyny)* [Kyiv: Dnipro, 1990], 416–439). If a certain abstractness and uncertainty in the article did not remove the ban on the poet's name in the Soviet Ukrainian press, at least it served as permission for others to publish his poems. (It must be noted that the tone of the article could not have been different. The series of materials that made up the book *Iz zabuttia – v bezsmertia* [*From Oblivion to Immortality*] was based on diaspora materials and was designed to legalize the previously forbidden names of Ukrainian writers.) However, publication was done in several ways. Particularly disgusting was the article in the newspaper *Molod' Ukrainy*, published on the instructions of the Central Committee and, in an additional slight, in an issue signed not by the editor-in-chief but by his deputy. When I proposed publishing a response to the lampoon, the frightened deputy made excuses for himself, saying,

The behind-the-scenes conversations at that time, which were occasionally passed around in the press, were also eloquent. Dmytro Pavlychko, Pavlo Zahrebelny, and a few other Ukrainian writers said that was the first time that they heard the name of the poet Vasyl Stus.

It was high time to form a group for departure.

It was rather difficult to do, as the political maneuvering and actual recklessness of many national leaders who had only recently been released from prison forced them to take responsibility for the possible consequences.

After talking to my mother, Valentyna Popelyukh, Henrikh Dvorko,[26] and Ihor Bondar,[27] I decided to ask Ms. Iryna Kalynets[28] to take charge of the Kyiv part of the reburial. She agreed.

"we want to publish Stus' words and that is now possible only in this form." The magazine *Ukraina* (No. 23 [1989]: 6–7) called its material about the poet "We Missed Life." The materials in the magazines *Prapor* (No. 2), *Zhovten'* (No. 7) and *Kyiv* (No. 10) were completely different. The publication in the newspaper *Literaturnaya Rossiya* (November 17, 1989) was important, although the quality of the Russian translation left much to be desired.

26 Henrikh Dvorko (1931–2012) was Doctor of Chemical Sciences, who in the late 1960s signed well-known protest letters against the arrests and military intervention in Czechoslovakia. As a result, he was fired from leading chemical institutes and had to work under the direction of a person who did not even hold a Candidate degree. After the arrest of Ivan Svitlychny, Dvorko helped his family financially. He was an organizer of the "Pripyat Republic," where the sixtiers gathered for summer vacations (after their arrests, their children gathered there). He was also the only person who did not destroy Vasyl Stus' self-published collection *Merry Cemetery* in 1972. At the time of the events described, he was Dmytro Stus' father-in-law.

27 Ihor Bondar was a stoker who was engaged in the distribution of self-published Ukrainian materials. In the 1960s, he served three years in a criminal camp.

28 Iryna Kalynets (Stasiv, 1940–2012) was a Ukrainian writer and activist in the Ukrainian resistance. She was arrested in 1972 and served her sentence in Mordovia separated by a few rows of barbed wire from Vasyl Stus. In 1975, when Stus was wounded in the camp by an awl, his life was saved only thanks to a hunger strike Kalynets organized together with Nadiia Svitlychna and Nijolė Sadūnaitė in the women's zone, demanding medical assistance for the victim.

The group departing for Perm included Oleh Pokalchuk,[29] who provided physical and organizational support, and Vasyl Hurdzan,[30] as we still needed to make a film. Valery Pavlov went as a videographer, and Bohdan Pidhirny as a cameraman. The sound director was Oleh Vachi. Oleksa Tykhy's sons, Volodymyr and Oleksandr, also went with us.

Volodya Shovkoshytny (the director of the film) left a week earlier than the rest to arrange all the necessary formalities on the spot. We were supposed to fly on November 15.

On November 13, a spontaneously formed funeral organizing committee, which I met through Ihor Bondar, gathered on Belorusskaya Street, in Mr. Ihor's apartment.

On one side, Levko Lukianenko, Mykhailo Horyn, Dmytro Korchynsky, Vasyl Ovsienko, Yevhen Pronyuk, and a few other people called to represent public organizations; on the other side, I as a representative of the family.

Attention was mainly paid to printing leaflets, sewing flags, and organizing a demonstration. I felt uneasy from the very beginning: everyone was convinced that the main thing was flags and leaflets. But what about the Ural unit, who were so often humiliated? ...

There was no talk about it.

When all the "recommendations" of the organizing committee were set out, I let them know that Iryna Kalynets would be in charge of Vasyl Stus' reburial in Kyiv and if the committee members had any plans to participate, they should coordinate all their actions with her. I also added that anyone who did not agree with such a decision could take part in the reburial of Yuri Lytvyn and Oleksa Tykhy. Where Vasyl Stus was concerned, I could not accept Levko Lukyanenko's proposal to carry the coffins from Boryspil airport to Kyiv or to turn the event into a political demonstration. Iryna Kalynets and I had agreed to push for maximum concessions

29 Oleh Pokalchuk (born 1955) is a Ukrainian poet, translator, and bard. He has engaged in business and politics, and promoted the establishment of Plast (the National Scout Organization) in Ukraine.

30 Vasyl Hurdzan (1926–2001) was an activist in the Ukrainian resistance and a political prisoner.

from the authorities, as we had not had any armed or militarized escort. And in general, the public resonance of this action had nothing to do with me as I was engaged in the reburial of my father ...

After my words, a terrible silence descended on the room for a few minutes. It seemed that even the always-bright aspect of Bondarev's cozy apartment darkened with the incredible tension and complete lack of understanding between the two sides. Neither Levko Lukyanenko nor Mykhailo Horyn, who in all candor had not expected such resistance to their plans, reacted, at least not until Dmytro Korchynsky exploded.

He spoke about the urgency and importance of these events for Ukraine, saying that nothing like this had happened since the reburial of Shevchenko and that this was not a family but a national matter. It had been easier a hundred years ago because "Shevchenko had no children."

That gave me serenity and determination.

Rising to my feet, I spoke in the direction of Korchynsky:

"I don't care much about your opinion of me, Mr. Dmytro, or the opinion of all your organizations. However, the family and I took care of all these arrangements. And it does not matter how sorry you are that Stus has a son. This is a simple fact and you will have to accept it. I will say further that this son considers everything that happens to be *exclusively* a family affair. I do not care if anyone likes it or not. Those who want to participate will coordinate their actions with Iryna Kalynets."

Korchynski flounced out of the apartment.

Of course, I overestimated my own strength and underestimated the support of the newly formed public structures, without whose intervention reburial in 1989 would have been impossible. However, this minor explosion helped me not only to create a future single nerve center headed by Iryna Kalynets, who proved to be a brilliant diplomat, under much more difficult conditions, in keeping events under control and not provoking the beatings that

occurred in 1995, in then independent Ukraine, during the funeral ceremony of Patriarch Volodymyr (Romaniuk).[31]

We parted, without reaching a final agreement on any matter. Once I arrived at Henrikh Dvorko's apartment on Petrovsky St.,[32] I called Iryna Kalynets in Lviv and, informing her of everything that had happened, asked her to come to Kyiv as soon as possible. The next day, I together with Oleh Pokalchuk purchased rubber gloves, ropes, tarpaulins, and cloth for the mortal remains of Vasyl Stus and Yuriy Lytvyn if, as we somehow had little doubt, the exhumation process had to be performed by us.

Slavko Chernilevsky and Bohdan Pidhirny hunted for film stock and a camera. Fortunately, there was a video camera, but it was only fit for amateur filming.

On the evening of the same day, a message came from Moscow that Alexander Tykhy was sick with fever and, obviously, would not be able to fly to Perm. Given that Oleksa Tykhy was buried in the Perm cemetery, Volodya, his youngest son, had to take it upon himself alone.

It was previously agreed that the newly formed All-Ukrainian Association for Victims of Repression would send two people to fly with us. I telephoned the Head of the society, Yevhen Pronyuk, who says:

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31 On July 14, 1995, the Ukrainian patriotic forces, without securing the approval of the authorities, decided to bury Patriarch Volodymyr on the grounds of St. Sophia's Cathedral, which was surrounded by special police units ready for such an attempt. When people, instigated by the organizers, started digging a grave at the gates of St. Sophia's bell tower, force was used against them. The bloody events of that July were not only a deathless disgrace to the authorities, who were so bold as to carry out such a blasphemy, but also showed the irresponsibility and indifference to the people of those who organized the funeral. Neither the people nor the ashes of the lost person should become small counters in political games. And I intentionally refrain from mentioning here the name of the man who ordered the troops to beat people, because, having the experience of organizing such an event, I am convinced that those who planned all this are no less responsible for everything that happened.

32 Dvorko's apartment was the headquarters for the reburial of Vasyl Stus, Yuriy Lytvyn, and Oleksa Tykhy.

- Vasyl Gurdzan and someone else will fly with you. I cannot be more precise as everyone is busy with leaflets, making flags and Kyiv action organizational arrangements.

- Don't you understand (I say irritably) that Volodya alone may not be able to resolve all the problems in Perm? After all, he is a son. If the exhumation has to be carried out without the support of the local authorities, is he supposed to dig the grave by himself?

- But you have so many going there.

- They are going to make a film. The studio has invested in the reburial and wants to film everything that will happen there. So, if you would like to participate and want all of the remains transported, please find a person who can help Volodya in Perm. We have a plane ticket already.

- Agreed, we will come up with something. Someone will fly with you.

I hung up, but the anxiety did not go away. I felt that the entire Perm part was under threat, and I could not change anything, because I had no leverage to influence the situation.

Then, for the first time in my life, I felt my father's support and decided to leave it all up to fate. We had to do everything we could and let fate decide.

We departed from Boryspil on November 15. It was my birthday. At the age of 23 it was too soon to take responsibility. Too soon to understand that on a frosty night, the nine people who were walking up the steps to board the "Kyiv–Perm–Novosibirsk" plane were flying not only to repatriate the bodies of Oleksa Tykhy, Yurii Lytvyn, and Vasyl Stus. First of all, we wanted to prove that we Ukrainians take care of something else besides our own philistine well-being. And, at least once in our lives, some of us are ready to risk everything we have to pay our last respects to those who managed to live not only for themselves and their families. There are millions of such people in Ukrainian history, but we remember the names of only a handful who, in addition to their feats in life, left behind a space of high love, which ensured that they would be remembered not only by their relatives. We flew to prove that the sense of self-respect, so organic to the small nations of the Armenians, Georgians, Estonians, Lithuanians, is no stranger to us.

And even though all the necessary documents were obtained, I doubted that we would achieve what we desired.

The previous prohibition was depressing, but the determination of the people (of whom only Vasyl Ovsienko, Vasyl Hurdz and I knew Vasyl Stus very well) was impressive. The others were flying to touch history.

This time the preparatory work for obtaining the documents was done to a high standard. On October 20, 1989, Volodymyr Shovkoshytny called Chusovoy again and hit a wall of "absence":

> "The chief doctor of the Sanitary Epidemiological Station V. V. Dyvdin is not available. His Deputy and the Head of the epidemiological department strongly insist that the situation is difficult. (Oh, we are remembered here!) They say, dysentery plus viral hepatitis.
> As agreed, I am sending a telegram on behalf of the First Secretary of the Union of Cinematographers of Ukraine, Mykhailo Belikov, to the Head of the Perm Regional Sanitary Epidemiological Station, Shaklein, and his Deputy, Luzin (the day before Luzin informed S. Chernilevsky by phone that all was calm in the region). And on October 24, we received the telegram: "The epidemiological situation in the Chusovskoy District this year is good. Perm Regional Sanitary Epidemiological Station. Deputy Chief Doctor Luzin."
> **The telegram is encouraging, but ... Just in case, we "arm" ourselves with a letter addressed to the same director of the BVO ZhKH V. V. Kazantsev: "The Union of Cinematographers of the USSR has started work on filming Vasyl Stus: The Road of Thorns about the outstanding Ukrainian poet. As the family has decided to rebury the father and husband, the film crew has included this episode in their film.**
> **Please inform us regarding the possibility for reburial of the ashes of V. S. Stus and the provision for this action by the communal services of Chusove town on November 2–3 or on November 15–18 this year.**
> **First Secretary of the IC of the USSR, People's Deputy of the USSR M. O. Belikov.**
> **Such a request to the Head of the District Communal Services! However, we did not dare to send this document by mail. It was decided that I would deliver it personally. We also decided not to make a fuss before the October holidays[33] and agreed to reburial on November 15–18.**

[33] In the USSR and for the first 10 years of independent Ukraine, November 7–8 was a public holiday and ritually celebrated. Parades, rallies and other festive events were designed to give the October coup in tsarist Russia a landmark significance. The celebrations were magnificent, with the obligatory noisy excessive drinking. A reburial on these days meant failure because *none* of the Soviet officials would help in its implementation under any circumstances, and would have thrown up every possible obstruction due to his official duties.

So, on November 7, I went to Moscow, hoping to gain the support of the Board of the Writers' Union. Vitaliy Krykunenko, a consultant on Ukrainian literature, treated me with respect and I flew to Perm with a letter from the Union addressed to the Executive Committee of the Chusovsky District Council of People's Deputies.

"The Secretariat of the Board of the Writers' Union of the USSR requests to assist the writer V. Shovkoshytny, the relatives of poets V. Stus and Yu. Lytvyn in resolving the issue of reburial of the writers' ashes in their homeland.

Secretary of the Board of the Writers' Union of the USSR Yu. T. Gribov."[34]

Volodya Shovkoshytny was waiting for us at Perm airport.

We had ten tickets, but did not see the tenth member of the group come.

10-15 minutes before the end of check-in, I called Yevhen Pronyuk from Boryspil Airport:

- Good afternoon, Mr. Yevhen. This is Dmitry Stus. Passenger registration is nearly over, and there are no people from the Association for Victims of Repression. Wasn't it possible to ask a man not to be late here?

- Dmitry, you know, we are really short of people. And here we have leaflets, flags, and transport. Someone needs to organize the arrival of people from the regions. We decided that it would be better for you to just return the ticket for a refund and hire someone directly in Perm ...

I listened to this tirade as if in a fog. At a certain point, it seemed that the ground opened under my feet and there was nothing to keep me upright. I do not remember what I said then, I just cannot forget the stern eyes of the casual passengers and a sense of burning shame: How can I tell Volodya about it? How can I leave him alone in Perm? How?

34 V. Shovkoshytnyi. "Narode mii, do tebe ya shche vernu ..." ("My people, I will come back to you ..."),7. An abridged variant of the article was published in the book: Ne vidliubyv svoiu tryvohu ranniu. Vasyl Stus – poet i liudyna. Spohady, statti, lysty, poezii. [I did not fall off my early anxiety. Vasyl Stus – poet and person. Memoirs, articles, letters, poems]. – K.: Ukrainskyi pysmennyk (Ukrainian writer), 1993, 365-371.

"Those beasts didn't send anyone," I muttered only to Oleh and Volodya, wo hid his shame for the people who should have taken care of the main thing. "I'm sorry."

Volodya rushed to call Moscow for Alexander to take medicine and fly the next day to Perm. It was good that there were no financial problems: something was provided by the Galfilm film studio, something was given by Nadezhda Svitlychna and something was collected by people in Ukraine, and we definitely had something.

The organization of the event in Kyiv was in full play and we were walking up the steps to board the plane which was to transfer us from November 15 to the 16th of November.

Volodya Shovkoshytny and ... an unexpected thaw were waiting for us in Perm. It was +2-3° C at night.

- If this weather lasts at least a day, we will not have to make a fire on the graves, Vasyl Ovsienko mentioned as we walked to the exit of the airfield.

I remembered my last visit here in September 1985, when we came to say goodbye to my dad and found only a freshly made earth mound. And my mother's desperate tears, shed in 1984 as well, when my father could not stand another humiliation – "Nagnis. Razdvin yagaditsi. Agali galovku" ("Bend over. Spread your buttocks. Expose head") – by pre-visitation "shmons" (inspections) that involved almost physically sensible hatred for my father. I remembered other tears – tears of guilt in the eyes of the dearest person, who emerged from behind the screen where the shmon took place, and my ears burned from the humiliation of the dearest person, a feeling of stupid disgusting fear and powerlessness to change anything ...

"What will our meeting be like now, Dad?" And will it happen? – I was tortured by doubts, as we trod the last meters of the airfield.

- It will happen, the sentence sounded as if from afar ...

- Who are you talking to sometimes? Oleh asked me when we climbed into the suburban train to Chusove.

"Yes, something is running through my head," I told him, not wanting to admit my incomprehensible weakness, and hastened to change the subject.

I did not call Irina Kalinets and my wife, Oksana Dvorko, from Perm. The group's complete lack of certainty did not facilitate night calls, which would only increase the anxiety of relatives. During the 4-hour suburban train ride to Chusove, where the Russian poet Yura Belikov and rooms in the local sports and working hostel were waiting for us, we discussed the details of the exhumation.

- When my friend filmed an exhumation a couple of years ago, he said that even despite fortifying themselves with alcohol, almost everyone vomited ...

- We need to fix vodka ...

"You have to pray beforehand," added one of the Vasyls (Ovsienko? Gurdzan? I do not remember).

Volodya Shovkoshytny remained in Perm. Coffins were prepared there. He did everything he could, and more. On the 17th he had to take the zinc coffins to the cemetery of the village of Borisovo in the Chusovsky District, where under markers with punched numbers rested the "boys." That is the term the members of the group in those days used for Yuriy Lytvyn, Oleksa Tykhy, and Vasyl Stus.

The preparatory work carried out by Volodya Shovkoshytny on the eve of our arrival was so essential for the final success that it must be recorded on its own.

In Perm I got to know Yuriy Belikov - a poet, journalist, editor of the avant-garde literary supplement "Children of Strontium." He was preparing material about ... Vasyl Stus. Yuriy will help us until the very last minute, and in the meantime he gives me the phones of not-indifferent people in Chusove. There were many of them.

On November 10, I sign a letter to the Deputy Head of the Perm United Air Detachment I. D. Grachev – the permission to transport home on November 18 by flight №7262 Novosibirsk - Perm - Kyiv three zinc coffins with the remains. Ihor Dmytrovych is a man who is not indifferent to the poet. He keeps wondering why he has never heard anything about the poet and is struggling to understand why a man is condemned for "Howls like a beast, drinks horilka [vodka] ..." even in Ukrainian ...

Deputy for the regime at the airport prohibited filming ...

At the regional sanitary-epidemiological station, I show the telegram to the Union of Cinematographers of Ukraine and ask for a certificate (permission) to call the film crew.

"You are trying to fool me!" Chief Doctor G. V. Shaklein is hesitating. And calls Chusove by a selector. The Chief Doctor of the Chusovsky Sanitary Epidemiological Station V. V. Dyvdin[35] crosses his heart that the permission will be granted.

This is already a tiny ray of hope.

I go to a special trust to order zinc coffins. The Chief Engineer Valery Pavlovich Kartsev turned out to be a man no less vigilant and no less quick-witted than the one at the sanitary-epidemiological station:

"You're beating about the bush!" And he disappears without a trace.

The coffins were ordered without him for November 16.

Our first day in Chusove is Monday the 13th! And what do we have: Kazantsev is on vacation, the Chief Engineer Musykhin is at a meeting in the City Executive Committee. I have asked to inform the management of my arrival and I am back in half an hour. The secretary looks down, points at the man:

- Are you Musykhin? I ask.

- Kazantsev!

What attention! Even the manager has come back from vacation.

I show all my documents and explain everything. But he already knows all this and I know that he knows ... Then I submit Belikov's Deputy request and ask him to write: "Rejected. Kazantsev" or "Agreed. Kazantsev." The answer is the most unexpected one: "We have information (!) that at the governmental level of the USSR and Canada (!!) the issue of Stus' reburial in Canada is pending" ...

"If Stus wanted to go to Canada," I say, "he would not get to Kuchino!" And besides, here is his son's letter!

- Then, go there!

- To the KGB?!

- Well ... there ... And we ... will do everything.

That's perfectly fine. I will go there.

"What has brought you here?" Vladimir Ivanovich, the friendly young man, asks.[36]

- These are our responsibilities. Our debts. - I take out all my documents, letters, and certificates.

All this is laid on the table. He carefully records the numbers and most important details from my papers.

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35 Vasyl Ovsienko in his book *Svitlo liudei* (Light of the People) indicates that the correct spelling of the surname is Dyvdin, not Dyldin, as erroneously stated in the publication of V. Shovkoshytny. 66.

36 Volodymyr Ivanovych Chentsov was the Head of the Chusovsky KGB regional department. From the end of 1981 to the end of 1984, he worked as a criminal investigator for the KGB in VS-389/36 camp and, according to V. Ovsienko (See: *Svitlo liudei* [Light of People], 66), *"was one of the people responsible for the deaths of political prisoners."*

- The information from your communal services about the reburial of Stus in Canada is nonsense, I explain. "You must know that even in their lifetime inmates of that prison were not in a rush to get to Canada ..."
I take out of my bag the tenth issue of Kyiv magazine and the thirty-ninth issue of Ogonek, where Stus' poems and the statements requiring his rehabilitation are published.
He is smiling reproachfully. And I continue:
- We came here not to settle accounts. We want our homeland to get back her sons. I have visited a legal adviser and know that there is no ban on it.
Having treated me to tea with lemon Vladimir Ivanovych ... came out...
Then a conversation with the Director of communal services:
- Vladimir Ivanovich has promised us his support. So please write here: "Agreed. Kazantsev" or "Rejected. Kazantsev."
And at this stage the communal struck me dumb:
- I have neither the right to agree or reject! ...
- But you have given the official permission?!
- I have gone beyond my authority. Kopalno does not belong to the territory of the City Executive Committee! He smiled sourly. - Get permission from the Sanitary Epidemiological Station and dig.
- Without any papers?!
- Any.
The only support the communal services in the person of V. V. Kazantsev gave us was the address of the factory, where we agreed with the coppersmiths to seal up the coffins.
I am going to the City Sanitary Epidemiological Station. The Chief Doctor is on a business trip. The Head of the Department Anvar Ravilovich Sharipov does not provide information:
- I cannot do anything without the Chief. Besides, I will share my thoughts with him: it isn't winter yet.
The brown snow of the factory Ural town is falling outside the windows...[37]
From 4 to 6 p.m., I speak in the editorial office of the local newspaper Chusovskoy rabochii (Chusovoy Worker). We have friends and a forum. I write a statement to the Director of the printing house Oleksandr Mykolayovych Mykhalyov for a truck. The coffins should be taken from Perm to the plane already holding the remains and then be delivered back to Perm. One-way distance is approximately 230 kilometres. Thanks to Mikhalyov, we have found a bus to transport the group to the cemetery and back to the hotel, which is 20 kilometers away. This is more than opportune, because the Director and the Chief Engineer of PATO, the bus company, which last time even took "Tourist" freely, adamantly refused us.
On the evening of the 13th, I call V. V. Dyvdin's home number. He has promised to issue a certificate-permission on the morning of the 14th. Eventually, we get it. That's all. No more papers are needed. The Chusovoy Sanitary

37 The town of Chusovoy was built around a metallurgical giant founded by French industrialists in the late 19th century. The Ogonyok tourist center is located on the outskirts, the largest and most modern ski center in the USSR.

Epidemiological Station allows exhumation and transportation in zinc coffins of ashes of the following persons:
1. Stus Vasil Semenovych, buried in the village of Kopalno.
... Grave Nr 9...
2. Lytvyn Yuri Timonovich, buried in the village of Kopalno.
... Grave Nr 7...
I went to the regional police department. I met the criminal investigation department chief, Anatoly Semenovych Mikryukov. He checked my documents again.
- From the legal point of view, everything is correct. The only thing is the District Inspector will join you to observe the formalities. And you will take someone from the village council in Kopalno as well ...
He summoned the district inspector, Faizul Abdulayevich Matyakubov. We agreed that on November 17, at 8:30, we would pick him up at Verkhneye Kalino, where he lived.
The newspaper editor promised to provide a car to take the coppersmiths to the cemetery. With the director of the Ogonyok school of the Olympic reserve, L. D. Postnikov, we went to the city cemetery (to the Ritual cooperative) to see about the gravediggers. And here it became clear that we would have to dig by ourselves ...
I was starting to believe that we would rebury Stus and his comrades. I called Yuri Belikov in Perm for him to look for a forensic expert because the local one had refused to go to the cemetery. I agreed with the Hotel Manager Lidia Ivanovna Alekseeva on group accommodation ...[38]

The group arrived at Chusove on the 16th, in the middle of the day. Volodya Shovkoshytny and Volodya Tykhy remained in Perm. The titanic work done by Shovkoshytny seemed to prevent any trouble. Little did we know that surprises were only just beginning.

After check-in at the hotel, I called home:

"It's all right." Settled. So far, no adventures.

"Why couldn't you call from Perm?" My wife and Iryna Kalinets were indignant at me in two voices. "We are resolving the issue regarding burial in the Baykove cemetery.[39] They called from the

38 Shovkoshytny, "'Narode mii, do tebe ya shche vernu...'," 8–9.

39 The idea to bury the bodies of Vasyl Stus, Yury Lytvyn and Oleksa Tykhy in the Baykove Cemetery in Kyiv first occurred to Volodymyr Holoborodko, because no one but him believed in the possibility of obtaining such a permit. And he ... made an unfortunate slip. He went to the Union, the Central Committee and ... he got the permission. Ironically, when they went to the cemetery to choose a location for the burial, Vasyl Stus' wife, Valentina Popelyukh, was without a seat in the car. Iryna Kalinets had to look for a seat for my mother. Holoborodko, who really wanted to personally choose a location, was left "without a place."

Pope's residence ...[40] They offered to hold a funeral service in the Catholic Church in Petropavlivska Borshchahivka,[41] but I refused," Ms. Iryna said. "The boys should be buried according to Orthodox ceremony. Even though all sorts of surprises are possible in the Orthodox Church. This is a matter of principle."

She did not suspect how much she would regret that decision on the day of the reburial.

"Well, everything is fine. Tomorrow at dawn, we are leaving for Kuchino. I will give you a call if something goes wrong," I said and hung up.

The long beeps seemed to magnify the emptiness that separates Chusovoy from Kyiv: we are here, they are there, but once again we all have to rely on fate because we cannot provide each other with any communication or material support. We all hope that each of us will do his best. However, even across the insurmountable abyss of uncertainty, there was the feeling that not only your enemies but also your friends were watching your every step, hoping that you would not make a mistake, that you simply had no right to make a mistake. I don't know why, but it seemed that this Kyiv support had become decisive: psychologically we were ready for everything except defeat...

Having agreed to meet in Chernilevsky's room at 8 p.m., Oleh Pokalchuk and I went to buy shovels and ropes. Despite our fears, none of the members of the group showed any negative emotions

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40 One episode well characterizes the tense situation of that. Oksana Dvorko, who was a kind of liaison between Perm and Kyiv, and therefore in intently anticipating news from the distant Urals, picked up the phone and heard something completely unexpected:
- You have a call from the Pope's residence ...
- From where? She did not understand. How, when under constant stress, could you digest information not directly related to the reburial?
- From the Pope.
- Excuse me, we have no "papa" (father in Russian), we only have "tato" (father in Ukrainian), she answered.
- From the Patriarch of Rome, she heard from the receiver and a pleasant voice began to ask about the problems and complications arising from reburial ...

41 A suburban village that almost merged with the Ukrainian capital. Very close to Sviatoshyn, where Vasyl Stus' family lived.

when it became known that they would have to dig and exhume on their own.

The surprises started at 8 o'clock.

"Vasyl Ovsienko left for Perm to hand the death certificates over to Volodya Shovkoshytny because coffins would not be provided without it," Slavko Chernilevsky immediately informed us. He has to return tomorrow morning. We will have to go to the cemetery without him. Vasyl will arrive with local journalists a little bit later. The truck with the coffins will arrive at the cemetery. However, not in the morning, but around noon.

Well. Things happen.

We part. Someone had a pocket Bible. I asked to borrow it for the night. Oleh and I read aloud from randomly opened pages. It calmed and allowed you to concentrate and internally mobilize. Our reading was interrupted by a sudden knock on the door.

- Guys, this is awful! All my money was stolen! Slavko was almost crying.

"Don't worry," I say. "I have brought some with me just in case."

We decided that we would not involve the police, because an investigation could mess up the whole business. Today, a decade and a half after the event, I do not rule out the possibility that this "robbery" was one of the well-planned scenarios designed to complicate or ruin things.

Slavko went to his room slightly calmed, but still tense.

We set to the Bible again.

It is a strange thing. I still remember in detail the whole chronology of that night, when the words extended into implications, impressions, and visions of the next day as though preparing us for something extra material. I remember in detail my impressions of the conversation with Oleh and ... the parallel influence of the sound of my dad's voice. The words were transformed into emotions, incomprehensible and unspoken feelings, which produced the absolute certainty that we would succeed at the enterprise. Oleh also felt this presence, although we had never discussed this strange aura with him. To some extent, these night visions as we

read the Bible explain the unexpected and almost unbelievable endurance of all of us the next day. Our certainty of success was almost absolute, which must have greatly astonished and irritated the civil servants.

We read the Bible almost until dawn.

On the morning of November 17, having pushed ourselves to eat something, we went to the cemetery in the village of Borisovo. It took 2 to 3 hours. On our way, we picked up the policeman Matyakubov who had to make sure we didn't do anything wrong. Then someone in civilian clothes approached us.

"If we are forbidden to carry out the exhumation, I will go on a hunger strike in the central square of Chusove," said Oleg, who knew about Stus only from the stories of his brother, Yurko Pokalchuk. The latter had been the best man at my parents' wedding. Yet in 1980, he had not dared meet Stus: he had had a trip to Latin America, and how could you appear after a ten-year absence to a person who was actually a stranger to you?

"And I will stay here," I answered Oleh. "I won't leave without my dad ..."

Let's move on.

In Perm, at the same time, a well-directed farce reached its climax.

Volodymyr Shovkoshytny managed to pick up the coffins from the special plant only at 9:15 a.m. on November 17. Only two were ready. The third had to be finished by Tykhy's sons because the master coffin maker had been brutally beaten by someone.

The truck with the precious cargo drove in the direction of the village of Borisovo, but its journey turned out to be too tortuous and nervous:

"About 10 o'clock, we were stopped at the checkpoint outside the city," Volodymyr Shovkoshytny recalls. *"This checkpoint was probably of strategic importance because there were three captains on duty (which of the drivers saw that?!), a sergeant-major, and even a man in blue tights sitting in a Zhiguli [a car based on the Fiat 124 manufactured in the Soviet Union] №78-85 PM.*

First, they checked the permit, then the steering box. They found that it was broken. Then they were forced to open the speedometer but the seals were in place. I got out of the cab. The driver pointed to the outer right rear wheel. It had a flat tire. While we were busy with the steering wheel, the other two wheels on the right got flat tires by "themselves." They put a spare wheel to replace the front one. The left rear wheels were divided between both sides. There was one good wheel and one with a flat on each side. The watch showed 11:40. There was another four and a half hours to drive. At 2 p.m. they would be waiting for us in the cemetery. Two captains check the steering box. There was a backlash, they said (who ever saw a Soviet truck without that backlash?). We go to the checkpoint again. (The one in the tights was there). Captain Chernyava asked on the radio what was going on in Chusove. He was told that the car left Perm yesterday for aviation fuel (the tank holding it is on the bodywork), the permit indicated different cargo and the driver had a certificate stating that the customer is the Writers' Union of the USSR. Again, I showed the three captains (and first of all, "blue tights") all my certificates and authorization documents. I repeat that the coffins are in the cemetery already, that tomorrow we have to take them to the plane, that the plane has been ordered, that relatives are waiting in Kyiv, that different services are waiting, that it is a sacred matter, that...

The driver wrote an explanatory note. Chernyava read it and approved.

- That's all. We are going! - I said.

Three captains and a sergeant-major looked at "blue tights" (such tights are memorable!) – There was no permission.

- "Do you know," one of the captains said suddenly, "that you are suspected of causing a road accident?"

- ?!!

- A boy was injured.

- Was there a boy?! - I ask gently. - By the way, where and when did it happen?

The captains frowned for a moment, and then the one who told us about the crime found the right words to say:

- On Heroyiv Hasan St.!

That was wise: there was no other way out of the city.

- "You will have to drive to the Sverdlovsk Regional Department of the DAI (the State Automobile Inspectorate)," the captain says, "there is an investigator already waiting there."

- Tell them, - I lost my temper, - that without a lawyer I will tell the investigator to stuff it ...

We got in the car. Eight out of twenty-four stars sat in the Zhiguli, next to them is "tights." They warmed up the car for a minute, three, five. On the seventh minute, I approached the car.

I told "tights" that the KGB promised to help me. Both kept silent.

It took a long time to go to the regional office. The captain and "tights" were behind us. It was a police escort ... I was getting ready to go on a hunger strike ...

We entered the office of the chief of the district department of the State Automobile Inspectorate.

- Comrade Captain! What's up with Chusovoy? - asks "our" captain.

- The command is the "All clear" - The team was "repulsed" - the honest eyes of the captain-leader assumed a shifty expression looking around, trying to gain a footing. - We have to apologize to you. An error occurred - the car number is the same, but the range is different ...

Well, there you are, everything has been solved successfully! - a happy smile lit up the face of "our" captain and he lifted up his arms.

- I told you this when we were at the checkpoint!

- Accept our apologies! – said the captain-leader again.[42]

Thus, in a truck with flat tires, the driver Sydorov and the writer Shovkoshytny went over roads full of holes to Perm and then to Borisovo, because, as the driver later said, "obviously they could not be bad people if those dirtbags bosses tried so hard to stop them being buried."

However, the group gathered in the cemetery knew nothing about it yet.

Despite a previous agreement, we failed to find the Head of the Village Council and our bus arrived at the cemetery without him.

I was blinded by the clean carpet of white snow, marked in many places by the tracks of birds and animals. A cemetery lay to the right of the road. My throat was constricted by a spasm of tears,

[42] Volodymyr Shovkoshytnyi. "Narode mii, do tebe ya shche vernu ...," 9.

which I could not hold back. Valery Pavlov's video camera was followed behind me as he wanted to capture a "historical" shot. And I choked up with tears. *Yesterday, only yesterday, I heard, Dad, your voice, and today, today we are waiting for a meeting. For some reason, I am sure that everything will turn out. I am not the best son. That is true, but you are not the best father either.* Pavlov ran ahead with the camera, and I was forced to hide in a small forest, not reaching the graves of my father and Lytvyn: strangers should not see my tears.

In about half an hour the spasms let up and with swollen eyes and ready for anything, I approached the graves. The knees softly sank into the wet, pleasantly soft snow We were lucky, that idea echoed in my head. It would be easy to dig, the ground was not frozen, and in Kyiv on the day of departure, the temperature reached minus fifteen degrees ...

The knees quickly got wet from the comfortable, almost warm snow. The barrel of the camera shoots close, and I do not want to see anyone else here, I need to be alone for a while ... I ask everyone to leave and stay at my father's grave alone for a moment.

Then everything resembled a slow-motion movie.

Matyakubov forbade us to start digging up the graves until the zinc coffins were brought and he had some paper from his management.

"Say it, say it," I thought, but said aloud:

– "Well, let's go back to Chusovoy to get the permit."

At noon, V. Chernilevsky, V. Gurdzan, V. Pavlov and I got on the bus to return to Chusovoy. Fate played another joke on us: Oleh stayed in the cemetery, I had to return.

In the district center, contrary to the worst forebodings and predictions, everything was solved simply. They allowed us to dig up the graves, but not to remove the caskets until the arrival of the zinc coffins.

When we returned to the cemetery, Oleh Pokalchuk had already started digging up his father's grave. I do not know what Matyakubov said and whether he told him anything, but the cop did not dare to physically interfere, given Oleg's physique.

The permit we brought relieved the tension, although some civilians joined the policeman who had gone to check if he had been deceived.

While Oleg, now joined by other members of the expedition, dug up the grave of Vasyl Stus, Vasyl Gurdzan and I began digging up the grave of Yurii Lytvyn. There was a short prayer. Rather than the ritual spitting on the hands, the shovel gently and easily penetrated the blanket of snow and entered the mysterious earth of the tomb. Despite internal fears, the digging was calm and easy, the frozen ground was no obstacle, and the physical work relieved us from psychological stress and the uncertainty of circumstances: "When will the coffins arrive? (will there be coffins?)"

From time to time some characters approached us:

- You have a good chance of spending tonight in prison - they muttered, however without lingering for long near any of us. We tried not to be left alone, the instinct of self-preservation asserting itself. Probably the only time in my life that a situation very clearly defined who was a friend and who was a foe.

At 2:30 p.m., Vasyl Ovsienko, Yuriy Belikov, the Director of the local printing house Mikhalyov, and Nikolai Gusev, a journalist from the *Chusovskoy rabochii* (*Chusovoy Worker*) newspaper, arrived.

Taking turns, we continued to sink into the ground layer by layer.

And only one thought from time to time came to mind: is this my father's grave? Is he buried here? Is not this yet another fabrication by the authorities, which I never trusted since my childhood? When this obsessive doubt (in Kyiv, my mother and I for some reason were very afraid that, in 1985, we were not shown the real grave of my father) became too persistent I set to work vigorously.

At 3 o'clock we heard Oleh Pokalchuk's joyful exclamation:

- Got it! Guys, there's something solid here! It seems we have reached the casket door!

Putting down the spades, we all gathered around the grave. Of course, this was our first victory. And what a victory! Despite everything, in spite of the whole world, in spite of the cops who immediately surrounded us on the sides of the grave, in spite of those indifferent Kyiv leaflets-printers and the heartlessly arbitrary

bureaucracy, we still achieved our goal.[43] The feeling of love and gratitude for these people, in whose company I was lucky to be, overwhelmed me, and I went from one to the other like a sleepwalker thanking them, sometimes aloud, and -sometimes silently.

My father's grave turned out to be shallow – "between 100 and140 cm"[44] – and dry. At that moment, I did not attach much importance to this.

Oleh Pokalchuk and Vasyl Ovsienko brushed the earth off the casket and prepared it for raising: fastened the ropes under father's coffin at the head and feet. Each movement was recorded by Pavlov on videotape. Bohdan Pidhirny was running somewhere all the time to recharge his very old camera, and the lack of film forced him to shoot only what he deemed "special."

Yuriy Lytvyn's grave turned out to be deeper: "150-180 cm."[45] However, we finished digging it up before dusk as well.

The hole in which Lytvyn's casket was located, unlike Stus' grave, quickly filled with water. It was growing dark. Volodya Shovkoshytny had still not come with the zinc coffins. Chernilevsky slowly started a panic: Where are the trucks? Internally, I remained unnaturally calm and waited for only one thing – the moment when the casket lid would be lifted. "Is it him or not?" – the pre-departure fears and anxieties did not let go, gave me no peace.

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43 At that moment and in Perm in general, we were as if isolated from the rest of the world. Deciding that we should rely only on ourselves, we did not trust to any external assistance. Without the psychological guidance of all the members of the Perm expedition, we would not have been able to achieve the special unity that characterized the film crew in November 1989. However, it is now clear that without the help of all concerned people in the world, who put pressure on the Gorbachev's administration, the new composition of the Central Committee of Ukraine and the Ukrainian government to allow reburial, we would never have broken through the wall of "playing it safe" and the bans. Writing these lines a decade and a half after the event and trying to recreate the feelings and emotions of that time, against all odds, I express my gratitude to those who made considerable efforts to organize the Kyiv part of the reburial, and to those who put pressure on the governments of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR. Without them, the reburial of Vasyl Stus, Yurii Lytvyn and Oleksa Tykhy in 1989 would have been impossible.

44 Ovsienko, *Svitlo liudei*, 66.

45 Ibidem.

Although I knew that if something were wrong, I would not be so calm, feeling even comfortable in this cemetery housing hundreds and hundreds of tragic and bloody human destinies generously showered with the "natural" and indifferent abuse of the empire's servants.

At 6 p.m., already in complete darkness, under the almost frankly joyful and mocking glances of our minders, we still remained calm and confident that nothing had happened. It was a long way to go to Perm. And on the road, as everyone knows, anything can happen. Despite trying to keep busy doing something, conversations failed to start, and everyone was looking for some kind of occupation for himself.

Yura Belikov with Bohdan Pidhirny and Vasyl Ovsienko even went to the nearest "izba" (a typical Russian house built from square frames of logs) to find out if there was a telephone there. It turned out that there was no telephone. Instead, they managed to agree with the owners, Nina Vasylivna and Serhiy Tymofiyovych Zherebtsovs,[46] to connect a powerful electric lantern (almost a searchlight) brought from Kyiv by Bohdan Pidhirny to their electrical network.

At 6:40 p.m., the upturned graves were flooded by artificial but still encouraging light. The policeman, the *oper* (police investigator), Dyvdin (the representative of the sanitary-epidemiological station), and Kazantsev (communal services) were shocked and one of them even went to the house to "talk" to the "disloyal" owners. However, he returned defeated. And it was encouraging to us that members of the "ordinary" Russian people had decided to help, neglecting the local authorities, on which, like all residents of small towns and villages they were quite dependent.

Well, we had done our best. The only thing was to wait. Having warmed ourselves for five minutes in the projector's light we were plunged into darkness again ...

A minute, two, three, four passed... From time to time I looked at my watch. The second hand seemed silent and unwilling to move at a regular pace. Having lit a cigarette I made my way through the

[46] Ibid., p. 67.

wet snow to a nearby strip of wood, leading into the deep darkness of a nearby swamp. The soil sinks beneath my shoes but does not cave in. For some reason, that was the moment that I came to understand one of my father's expressions, which came from his letters and conversations of 1979–1980: "Time is not a linear category." It all depends on how you, an individual, fill (expand/narrow) its boundaries. Sometimes, a single minute enriches you with a spiritual knowledge, such as cannot be gained by a lifetime's experience.

These were just such minutes.

The possibility that the truck would not arrive with the coffins was not thought of. It was a trial and you had to go through it, dropping the facade of everyday life ...

"Dmytro, Dmytro," I heard Oleh's distant voice. "They have arrived, the truck has arrived!"

I returned to the joyful excitement of friends and the officials' disappointment. The latter were not at all prepared for such a course of events. Volodya Shovkoshytny told us the story of his experiences in the circles of hell, and the driver Sidorov only grunted and worked on the truck:

"The wheel rims are completely bent. Never mind! We will get there and make the best of a bad job. It is a long night," he said, taking a drag on a cigarette with satisfaction. "Oh, I want to drink, but you must not. They will be all over us ... bitches ..."

At 7:30 p.m., my father's coffin was raised. I did not take part, watching the process from the side, trying to remember every detail. First, a wider part of the box appeared above the edge of the grave—that should be the head—then a narrower one: the legs. Wearing the rubber gloves brought from Kyiv by Oleh Pokalchuk, the participants carrying out the exhumation started to open the lid. A few nails came out easily.

It was darkened, but—fantastic!—untouched by corruption, it was the native face of my father, looking at me. Corruption had only marked the tip of his nose, which used to be so alive and almost mobile during conversation, especially when Dad was in a

good mood. His eyes were closed – monsters, but not fully – it quietly sank in. Only then did I feel the eerie silence, which was not broken even by the close-standing minders around us.

There was a shoe with its sole "hanging out its tongue" just under his face, hiding a protruding Adam's apple. I imagined that one of the servant-supervisors, as he was burying Dad in a rush to prevent us from saying goodbye to him in 1985, threw that shoe at a random place on Dad's body before hammering down the casket lid. It struck him, as I figured to myself, on the face.

Below there was some unnatural damage to the left side of the chest.[47] Only two buttons were done up (in addition, one button was offset), the uniform had almost decomposed. The second shoe took refuge shyly at his feet as if hiding from the shame of his partner, which someone had forced to despise its former owner.

To restrain the powerful impulse to fall upon my father's neck after an eight-year separation, I turned away and involuntarily clenched my fists.

Forgive me, Vasyl, that I saw your naught
while lifting the casket lid,
that oper Kovalevich was all eyes
(Well, turn away!), but operas are on the stakeout -
watching your son (son!) had turned away,
but oper will never turn away,
cemetery shaky gates
held arms out, and sunflower husk
is scattered by sullen cop
on pure snow of the doubling crosses,
and he is ready to stitch the son up
with abuse over his father's grave ...[48]

47 It was this damage that provided additional evidence in favor of the version of Vasyl Stus' violent death. This was commented also by Yurii Belikov, who went to the local clairvoyant with photos of my father. The picture we saw that November evening gives Yurii Belikov grounds to say that *"the circumstances of Stus' death have not been made clear yet"*: Yury Belikov, "Vo imia ottsa i syna," *Za cheloveka*, No. 10 (44) (December 2001): 6.

48 Ibid.

When Vasyl Ovsienko, Oleh Pokalchuk and others transferred Vasyl Stus' body to a cloth brought from home and then the cloth with the body to one of the zinc coffins, a bone crunched. It seemed to be the neck.

Vasyl Gurdzan placed church symbols inside. We stood and prayed. And lit a cigarette. The boys carried the coffin on their shoulders, not yet sealed and covered with a door, to the truck. They sealed it there. And I felt that this was my last and finest meeting with my dad ...

We were illuminated by the stars and the moon, whose light filled the space not only of the cemetery but also shone on the beautiful and proud river, against whose current Yermak once went to conquer Siberia. We also went against the current, and it did not take much effort for the current to become our companion.

Before 8 o'clock we returned to the upturned grave of Yurii Lytvyn: his casket was already covered with water up to the lid. The striking contrast to the grave of Vasyl Stus made us freeze with uncertainty. To raise the casket to the surface, one of us had to put a rope under the casket knee-deep in grave water.

Physical fear of the corpse's poison returned and pressed on the psyche. Imagination and the spine-chilling eeriness of the task threatened to become an insurmountable obstacle, made all the worse by painful fantasy. The eyes of our minders shone with malice as if they thought: "Are your knees shaking?" Oleh Pokalchuk took the initiative. Going down to the bottom (his pants did not dry before we got to Kyiv) without any ado he did what each of us subconsciously preferred to put on someone else's shoulders.

The lifting of Lytvyn's casket was a long and hard process. Vasyl Ovsienko, unable to keep his balance, started sliding into the hole, but someone's strong hand caught hold of him at the last moment. Finally, the casket was lifted out, torrents of dark water pouring down from it. When the casket lid was raised we saw an almost completely decomposed body, which for unknown reasons had no time even to expose the bones of the host. Contrary to the fears of the day before, it did not frighten or discourage anyone. Silently, some wearing gloves, some without them, we began to transfer the body to a white cloth. The skull cracked and Vasyl Ovsienko's bare

hand received a drop of the brain which once strained, worked, and governed Yury Lytvyn's life. Now, at the whim of fate and by the evil will of self-satisfied criminals, it found itself on the hand of a former sworn brother, causing concern to the newly arrived local doctor. Yes, we violated all the rules of exhumation. However, was there a way not to violate them under those conditions?

Finally, the body was transferred to a zinc coffin. A memorial service was held. We bowed ... to the holes staring at us with black emptiness and a series of numbered markers. They had lain in a strange land.

Having removed the numbers from the markers and somehow filled the graves, we went back to Chusove. A long and extremely bright day was coming to an end so quickly that even the second hand regained its usual beat.

Around 11 o'clock at night, we arrived at the hotel. There we learned that the Tykhy brothers had not managed to exhume their father in Perm. Everything was postponed to the day of our departure. Volodymyr Shovkoshytny and the driver Valery Sidorov spent the whole night tinkering with the truck. It had to go in the morning and who knew what other surprises would lurk around the corner. And we had to get to the plane on the Ural off-road.

An hour and a half before departure, a zinc coffin with the ashes of Oleksa Tykhy was delivered to Perm airport. Unlike me, the Tykhy brothers had to carry out the exhumation themselves. But it worked!

We boarded the plane light-heartedly, soared into the dark sky of Perm to land in Kyiv after a few hours of flight ...

Kyiv greeted us with an unexpected glow of red-black and yellow-blue flags and several thousand people. Contrary to expectations, it did not cause any emotions, at least for me. Kyiv's cold after the slush of Perm seemed something unreal, free of internal tension. Everything that caught my eye seemed not worth noting as a special effect. The rally, the leaflets ... Some truck, where for some reason we stood together with my mother with candles in our hands. Her eyes —abysses of grief studded with the crystals of long-dried tears—wandered somewhere in the past.

Oleh Pokalchuk's trousers and shoes had still not dried out and were becoming stiff before our eyes. Attempts to get the organizers of the meeting, Mykhailo Horyn, Yevhen Pronyuk, and others, to arrange a car that would take Oleh home failed. They said there were more important things. And although the money was found without any problems, for some reason the "more important things" provoked a particularly sharp and even inadequate reaction.

The cargo was finally released. My mother and I stood under a shower of patriotic speeches and high-sounding words, and I didn't hear anything—I saw only Lytvyn's grave, where Oleh was standing, trying to put a rope under the casket and not soak his outer clothes ...

Candles ... many candles ... my mother's completely dry eyes. Fate did not allow her to see her husband for a last time or to stay alone with his coffin. The public torture continued.

Finally, everything was finished ... Ihor Bondar took the responsibility of getting the coffins to the Pokrovska (Intercession) Church, where the next day the funeral services were to take place ...

The next day was the coldest of the whole winter of 1989–1990. The temperature reached minus 25 degrees, but it seemed that people who had gradually extricated themselves from the clutches of fear, felt it not at all.

The funeral service in the church dragged out. Orthodox priests, at the authorities' behest, did everything possible to ensure that the service carried on indefinitely. Interrupting them, the Greek Catholic priests had to intervene and finish it. In addition, we had to drive to Chornobylska Street.[49] It was 2 p.m., the time that the motorcade was scheduled to arrive at Sofiivska Square, where a crowd of many thousands was already waiting to say

[49] In a sixteen-story building at 13A Chornobylska St., Apt. 94, Vasyl Stus lived in Kyiv between his two prison terms, from August 1979 to May 1980.

goodbye and to get acquainted with names unknown to the majority: Vasyl Stus, Yuriy Lytvyn, and Oleksa Tykhy.[50]

After 3 p.m., we arrived at Sofiivska Square, which greeted us with flying flags and tens of thousands of human faces, who, after waiting in the cold for several hours, were anxiously waiting, uncertain whether we would come or not.

The organizers of the action had not managed to reach an agreement: desperate people insisted that the coffins with the remains should be carried from St. Sofia, but Iryna Kalinets had already agreed with the authorities to take the bodies to the cemetery by bus.

50 This statement is not in the least an exaggeration. Even the film's director, Stanislav Chernilevsky, knew almost nothing about Vasyl Stus before his reburial. When I met him, his knowledge of the future hero of the film was limited to a few poems heard on Radio Liberty, recited by Nadezhda Svitlichna. They did not know even that much about Lytvyn and Tykhy. Vasyl Ovsienko and Vasyl Hurdzan did their best to expand the participants' knowledge about these people. About the same, if not even less, was the knowledge of the people gathered on Sofiivska Square in Kyiv. However, another factor contributed to this mass reburial: people overcoming seventy years of fear for the first time filled the streets for something other than the celebrations of the first of May or the seventh of November. And as much as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB set out to "control" the reburial, much remained out of their control. Tykhy, Lytvyn, and Stus were the first to break free of "distant Siberia," to which millions of Ukrainians had been deported and from where only a few returned, with almost every Ukrainian family having their "internees." Therefore, consciously or not, when seeing off the last three Ukrainians who died in the camps, each of them accompanied by his relatives, peers, and childhood friends. It is likely that this psychological phenomenon made Vasyl Stus' name quite popular and well-known in Ukraine in what turned out to be a short time. I must admit that credit for that goes to Levko Lukyanenko, Vasyl Ovsieko, Yevhen Pronyuk, Dmytro Korchynsky, Mykola Horbal and many other people. They took a diametrically opposite position on the priority and necessity of certain actions. I considered the Perm reburial part to be the main affair and they stressed the Kyiv part. Because, in addition to the Christian content, it was important to help people overcome the long-standing fear of the authorities. Looking back on those days from a distance of 15 years, I must thank luck for assigning the governance of these two interconnected parts to Irina Stasiv-Kalynets who found the necessary compromise between family and national and political interests. This chapter provides a private view of the history of the reburial seen by relatives' eyes. Moreover, to preserve emotional truth, almost no time adjustments were made to "smooth" things over.

It took half an hour to sort out everything. The most active participants began to shake the bus carrying the coffin of Vasyl Stus, trying to force the removal of the coffin and the body of Vasyl Stus. In the bus, the coffin and the relatives of Vasyl Stus swayed in obedience to these strange, already inhuman swings. Mom cried. Oleh Pokalchuk, who was sitting next to me, only tightened his hold on my hand, but I still broke free and left. Oleh followed me. The young and grown men who a moment ago had been rocking the bus together, looked blackly at us, made a lane and no longer tried to play their games. Thus, in the heart of the funeral procession, a climate of confrontation and almost antagonism arose, and it was not dispelled.

In five minutes, the procession started moving: Iryna Kalynets managed to agree with the security services on a new scenario for the funeral procession. It is quite possible that Ms. Iryna's conversation with the police and the KGB about the need to change the scenario, rather than trying to dictate to the thoroughly intimidated secret services under the shelter of a crowd of thousands of people, helped prevent the worst.

A decision was made to stop at the monument to Taras Shevchenko, carry out the coffins and bow to Kobzar (Taras Shevchenko's nickname). We made three circles of honor and then the coffins were carried at shoulder height to the cemetery. We followed my father's coffin and did not recognize the city that only the day before was indifferent to everything. Now the streets to the Baykovo cemetery filled with thousands of different faces.

And here were the graves. There were short speeches by Ivan Drach, Mykhailyna Kotsyubynska, Levko Lukyanenko, Iryna Kalinets, Zenovy Krasivsky ...

People kept coming. The suffering, weary faces of those who had walked the same path as my father and survived made their way to the graves. Around the frozen holes the dense wall of people was extremely tight: it was possible neither to move nor escape the pressure of the rows before and behind. Many ran past other graves to be present at the historic moment. As always, journalists were the most bothersome. The funeral procession was slowly turning into a banal crowd. People still kept coming. At one point, I even

had to grab the hand of my mother, who was almost pushed down into one of the graves. The cold was growing fiercer. The sun dipped below the horizon 20 minutes earlier. Twilight was dying into the dark.

Finally, it was finished. The coffins were laid to rest and the gravediggers ... were kicked off.

"Let's fill the holes with earth using our hands," cried the reckless people, forgetting the cold.

The difference between Perm and Kyiv was unbearable. Having asked Ihor Bondar to stay until the grave was filled in,[51] I threw a few lumps torn from the ground on my father's coffin (I could not reach the others) and almost ran home.

Thus ended the four-day epic of the reburials of Vasyl Stus, Yurii Lytvyn, and Oleksa Tykhy, which helped Ukrainians break free of fear and at the same time revealed the gap that, throughout Ukrainian history, existed between Ukrainian man and those who claim to be his leaders. Everyone has his own interests.[52] Today, this thesis, unfortunately, remains as relevant as ever.

Thus, on November 19, 1989, the name of Vasyl Stus started to enter the minds of Ukrainians precisely as a fighter-martyr, an innocent killed for the truth and rights of the Ukrainian people. Mykola Ryabchuk, Kostiantyn Moskalets, Tamara Gundorova, Vasyl Ivashko, Marko Pavlyshyn and a few other researchers are trying to dismantle this populist stereotype, which was finally formed under the influence of reburial.

However, this stereotype is fully motivated. One might even say it was programmed by the fate of Vasyl Stus, which he, contrary

51 Ihor Bondar, together with his guys and some Greek Catholic priests, were filling in the graves. In the darkness that suddenly filled the sky, the people, frightened by the hopeless attempt to fill in the graves using their hands and the responsibility for leaving the graves open, started quickly to break up or, as described by Ihor, to turn tail and run away. Igor Bondar and his boys filled in the graves, and the Greek Catholic priests brought by him "sealed" them.

52 According to various sources, the number of people who accompanied Stus, Lytvyn and Tykhy on their last journey ranged from 75,000 to 105,000. Kyiv had not seen such a large number of people since 1917. That year, on April 1 (March 18 in the old style), a 100,000-strong demonstration of Ukrainian social and political forces took place in Kyiv, which ended with a rally on Sofiivska Square.

to numerous of his statements, was consciously and consistently forming. Someone had to become a "voice of resistance and protest," he wrote in his reflections. And this precept appears in Stus' work too often to be ignored.

However, and here I completely agree with the thesis of "modern" researchers, the formation of Stus-the-artist occurred in parallel with the formation of Stus-the-patriot, but under the influence of a reading far broader than the patriotic. Hence his worldview, his very way of perceiving the world, although it showed the signs of a European-educated intellectual, yet it was of one who, understanding and enamored of this cultural space, above all respected Ukrainian traditional rural culture, which he desperately tried to modernize or at least to present in the language of (to him) contemporary art.

Today, as this book is being written, there is no doubt that in Ukrainian history Vasyl Stus belongs to the too small "handful" of personalities whose moral authority is recognized in both the East and the West of Ukraine. However, today I am not at all sure that the *life creativity* of Vasyl Stus, which is often opposed to his works, is less important for the formation of the world in which we have to live today.

> And the Lord has not warned me again,
> and again the road has gone.
> So—goodbye—in space
> and—goodbye in time.[53]

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Vasyl Stus' Ancestry and Childhood

When giving birth to us, no one cares about our opinion, unfortunately.
(Vasyl Stus)

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Ukrainian village, sung by Mykola Gogol and Velimir Khlebnikov, Taras Shevchenko and Panteleimon Kulish, Hryhir Tyutyunnyk and Oleksandr Dovzhenko, as well as many other writers and intellectuals, and not only those of Ukrainian origin, entered the period of its ultimate decline. Rapid industrial growth and the technological revolution were incessantly dragging its most active creative part into the cancerous tumors of the city, destroying not only its conventional way of life and customs but also putting a time bomb under its living base – tradition.

The peasants were in real danger of "falling out" of history. Every year, the cultural centers of agricultural Ukraine more and more acquired the features of urban culture, consigning the village to "live by memories," i.e., to preserve in its environs the facade of a cultural presence in the form of songs, rituals and customs that were quickly losing their sacred character. Under the pressure of the young and aggressive cultural field of the industrial city, the original traditional cultures were increasingly transformed into pasteboard pieces of scenery. Although they remained intrinsic and meaningful to the first generation of migrants who moved from the villages to the cities, these traditional cultures were completely alien to their children and grandchildren, who could not psychologically attune themselves a slow-rhythm culture, organically entwined with the natural environment and closely bound to the greatest peasant value – the land. And although on the eve of the First World War these processes had not yet taken a threatening form, but existed only as tendencies, mass escapes into "the hamlets" of the distant and foreign lands of the Russian Empire of Stolypin's time, as well as the desire of active youth to break free of the rural environment and join social groups which offered the above-