

Emigrussian, a story about emigrants.

Many of those who left Russia after the outbreak of war in Ukraine find it difficult to choose a definition, to pick the word that best describes their identity. Some have no trouble defining themselves, but even among them there is no single term, even if the reasons for emigration are the same.

“Refugees” are now refugees from Ukraine, and even those who were threatened by direct violence from other people or the state in Russia do not call themselves that, so as not to compare military threat and political repression. Under article 1, paragraph A, subparagraph 2, of the 1951 Convention, a refugee is any person who “owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence in the country of his former habitual residence, is unable, because of such fear, to avail himself of it”.

The word “emigrant” has a particular historical – mostly Soviet – context. It is the white emigration of the 1920s and, later, those who left after the partial opening of the Iron Curtain. Now many say that they are not emigrants because there is a big political context behind it, and it implies that in Russia they must have been heavily involved in the political life of the country. And many feel that they “haven’t done enough.” There are people who call themselves migrants, but because of the common association with migrant

workers from Central Asia, termite is also not popular.

“Expat” is the most neutral and aloof term, which implies departure of one’s own volition; however, many consider their departure forced, even if they had planned to leave before the war. Also, “expat” seems too “new-fangled” and alien in colloquial speech. It is easier for those who moved with the company for which they work – they call themselves “relocants”, and so do some people who left on their own because, in their opinion, it does not label them as runaways.

It is difficult to say whether this is a problem of language – the formation of the “blank” – or whether there is a reluctance to be categorized. Either way, an unfilled space for self-determination is created. One is left either to choose from what is there, or to make up one’s own options, or to leave the space empty, undefined – which can also, to some extent, be a statement of one’s situation, fears, hopes, and circumstances.

About the author:

Egor Borie is a documentary photographer from Russia. He emigrated to Georgia, where he lives and shoots projects on the theme of emigration.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/egorborie/>



Max, paraglider trainer. In the rush to avoid being mobilized, he crossed the border on a bicycle.



Zhanna borrowed money from relatives to open a vegan cafe in Tbilisi, and has been operating for two months without a loss.



Dima made a performance in which he tried to represent the experience of crossing a border.