



MARCH 2022
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF
THE REACH BEYOND MINISTRY TO THE PEOPLES
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

***And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:
but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
(Mat 10:28)***

This is probably one of the most emotionally difficult reports to write about our ministry in the past 30 years. Not long ago we followed daily the number of infected, hospitalized, and deceased from Covid; we have awoken to a state of war between Ukraine and Russia. As we are following recent events from different sources, it is hard to concentrate on anything else.

Those of us who lived through the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 remember the shock of the "surprise" that preceded the military exercises of the then Warsaw Pact. The scenario of betrayal and invasion of a country that until then had lived in peace is strikingly similar. Russia lured the government of the time to Moscow for negotiations, where they were "convinced" that a counter-revolution was taking place in Czechoslovakia. A similar scenario is repeated in Ukraine. A few weeks later, "normalization" began, and our country became a Russian gubernia for the next 20 years.

Just hours after the Warsaw Pact armies invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 Karel Kryl composed the song, "My Little Brother, Close the Gate!". Until it happened, no one believed that the occupation of a friendly nation would take place.

My little brother, don't sob
They're not boogeymen
You're already mature
They're just soldiers
They arrived in square Iron caravans
With a tear on our eyelids
We're staring at each other
Stay with me, my little brother
I'm worried about you
On the winding roads

My little brother in semi-boots
It's raining and dark outside
This night won't be short
The wolf craved for the lamb
My little brother!
Did you close the gate?
My little brother, don't sob
Don't waste your tears
Swallow your curses
And save your strength
You must not reproach me
If we don't reach the end
Learn this song
It's not that complicated
Lean back, my little brother
The road is broken
We'll stumble
We can't go back
It's raining and dark outside
This night won't be short
The wolf devoured the lamb
My little brother, close the gate!
Close the gate!

The author uses poetic devices, symbols, and images. The whole song/poem can be considered an allegory, where the little brother represents fellow citizens or the republic and the mentioned path further development. The night is symbolic of the normalization period, the lamb and the wolf represent Czechoslovakia and the big, bad USSR. Similarly, the closing of the gate refers to the fairy tale of the goats and the wolf. The designation of the iron caravans is a euphemism or metaphor for tanks, and the statement that they are just soldiers is also belittling – though somewhat ironic. The little brother's semi-shoes are also a symbol, suggesting unpreparedness for the situation.

This time the hungry wolf wants to devour those who got out of the post-war division of the world. The situation for Europe does not look good. The current events are happening too close by, and none of us knows what lies ahead.

The European Union and the Green Deal led the whole of Europe to be dependent on Russia. No one of those countries can do without their oil and gas. The price of petrol has climbed to \$8 a gallon. The Czech Republic is a small country and public transport works quite well. Worse is the sense of unpredictable events that threaten Europe.

Refugees from Ukraine, that is, mothers with children, are arriving in large numbers. Over 3 million left their homes and fled to Poland, 300,000 to Czechia, and the same number to Slovakia for safety. The atmosphere of unity and solidarity from neighboring countries is amazing. The local people are helping with everything they

can, especially with accommodation. Health care for refugees is provided by the Government. Several initiatives have been organized by churches and humanitarian organizations. Schools and kindergartens for the children are set up. The state is supplying weapons and medicine to Ukraine.

We are praying and hoping that the Russians will not come back and occupy formerly East European or Baltic countries as well. We are praying that the situation will not lead to a larger military conflict where ABC (WMD) weapons will be used.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. (Genesis 8:22).

PRAISES AND PRAYER NEEDS

- Reconnected. Last week, in this tense war situation, we met as the Euro-Asian team of Reach Beyond in Istanbul, Turkey. Why in Turkey? Because Turkish Airlines covers most -stan countries with direct flights. The words of the RB President, Daniel Enns, via Zoom connection on God's dependability and his own personal testimony were very encouraging for each of us. The president's message was concluded by supporters' affirmation – we want to hear and participate.



This is not Siberia it's Istanbul, Turkey!

- Our church in Kladno provides noon meals in the church office to the refugees who are staying in the hotel where we meet.
- Please pray with us for wisdom and governmental leadership, unity, courage, trust, and patience of all involved.
- Keep us and the whole situation in your prayers.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS,
SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION
IN OUR LIFE AND THE CZECH & SLOVAK MINISTRIES**

**In His Sovereign Grace,
Pavel and Klara Steiger
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