



MAY 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 can destroy
both soul and body in hell.
(Mat 10:28)***

An ordinary April day

The news about war development in Ukraine is almost impossible not to pay attention to. On one of the sunny days, we were getting restless and decided to take a day off. Our first stop took us to a large garden shop about an hour's drive from Prague. Klara couldn't resist the bright yellow colors. Lunch at a backpacker inn was also enjoyable. From there we continued to the North toward Germany.

A little reminiscence: In the days of the Iron Curtain (our youth), the train between two Czech towns, a distance of about 8 miles, went through former Communist East Germany. On the train, Czech passengers were accompanied by border guards and dog handlers. They made sure that none of the passengers would think of jumping the train to escape via communist Germany to West Berlin until 1961.

When we arrived at German Zittau our steps took us first for a cup of coffee. In the grocery store, we replenished favored food supplies. Some of them are of better quality and prices than what we have. We bought more flower plants. From Zittau we continued about 3 miles through Poland back to Czechia. There we filled up with gasoline. It's about 30 % cheaper than in Germany or Czechia. At this time the price is about \$8 a gallon. To conclude, on a distance of about 4 miles we crossed two borders (Germany / Poland / Czechia) and used three currencies to pay. The entire day trip was about 100 miles. We returned home refreshed. The next day we unexpectedly crashed – the flu or a virus knocked us off our feet. On Sunday we were unable to attend the church. On top of it, this was the day of our 57th wedding anniversary. However, the virus took us back to reality.

The first phase of the Ukrainian refugee crisis went well, so far. We are delighted that over 3 million mothers with children found refuge in Poland (7.8 % of the population of Poland). To give you an idea, it's as if the US was flooded with 26 million mothers with children in just 2 months! About 700 thousand mothers with

children found refuge in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (4.6 % of the population of Czechia and Slovakia), 850 thousand in Romania, etc. Over 10 million out of 40 million Ukrainians (25 %) have been displaced and 5.5 million (13 %) have left Ukraine. They were welcomed with open arms. The government, individuals, churches, and the immigration authorities quickly organized lodging, health insurance, placing children in schools, and helped especially those qualified to find employment as assistants and aides in hospitals, nursing homes, and factories. The solidarity with refugees is unprecedented. All 6 small churches we work with care for about 60 Ukrainian mothers and children.

Phase two, integration of refugees, is on a good track as well. It is interesting how quickly we are brushing up on the basics of Russian, Polish, and Slovak languages. We hardly need any help with translation. Slavic linguistic similarity is a great help.

Phase three pertains to the future. For now, many mothers and children are safe. Their husbands, sons, and fathers (all men from 18 to 60 are not allowed to leave, except fathers of 3+ children) are putting their lives on the line to defend the independence of Ukraine. Most refugees have families back home, many have nowhere to return to. When and if this war will end remains a question.

There is a lot of Russian propaganda circulating on the Internet that presents the invasion of Ukraine as Russia's self-defense and liberation of Ukraine. Nazism/nationalism is often confused with national self-consciousness. To better understand the roots of the conflict there is a need to understand basic terms.

Our ministry

We have to admit that the whole war situation in Ukraine takes away some of our focus on our routine work. Despite all this, we continue to translate, write, preach and record "Ask Pastor John (Piper)" programs.

Euroasia and European Union (EU)

The largest Eurasian continent has been inhabited by various civilizations over the millennia. It covers territory from Vladivostok to Lisbon. This vast area was home to approximately 75 % of the world's population. The Soviet Union used to be the largest country and one of the most multi-ethnic states in the world (about 128 ethnic groups). The north-south Ural mountain range (about 1600 miles long) is the natural divider between Europe and Asia. *"The Urals have been viewed by Russians as a 'treasure box' of mineral resources, which were the basis for its extensive industrial development" (Wikipedia/Ural Mountains)*. It accounted for 60 % of its economic output, and 75 % of its energy resources. The growing gap in economic performance between the West and the East led to the Soviet Union's break up in 1991.

The pretended end of the Cold War paved the way for the extension of the EU. At the time of the West's "courtship" with the now-defunct Soviet Union and its successor Russian Federation, few could have imagined that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, ten years after the formation of the present EU, came up with the initiative to become the leader of Euroasia economic cooperation, creation of a free trade zone and a more advanced economic integration that would stretch from Vladivostok to Lisbon. Russia has embarked on an ambitious journey ...

Unheeded warnings

The United Nations was warned and Germany was criticized in 2018 for dependence on Russian gas. Climate change, the Green New Deal, and industrial emission regulations led to a transformation of minimum gas storage obligations. The result was deeper dependence on Russia's resources. The controversial natural gas Nord Stream pipeline under the Baltic Sea was supposed to transport natural gas directly from Russia to Germany. The project supporters believed that the joint project would increase security. Opponents and critics of the project were silenced. Geopolitical impact and economical security were underestimated.

For 77 years, Russia and the Western world had built an illusion of peace, until Putin publicly declared that Russia was fighting against the US and NATO. He began threatening the West with nuclear weapons and, through the mouths of Russian commentators, declared that Ukraine was only the beginning. So it was not NATO that made Putin an enemy icon, but Putin himself who put himself on the pedestal of the enemy of NATO and, indeed, of the entire West. This has undoubtedly shaken Western public opinion, and as the horrific stream of videos of Ukraine, and the war grew on social media, public attitudes towards NATO changed dramatically. In all European member states, the Alliance is now supported by the vast majority of the population. Pacifist countries such as Finland and Sweden are applying for membership, even though the governments of these countries are headed by women, who, according to feminist hypotheses, should prefer to negotiate. Armaments have ceased to be an unwanted word, and even in Germany, they are considered a self-preserving necessity, with the Bundestag releasing an unprecedented EUR 100 billion for arms spending. Another positive of the Ukrainian war. ... Quite simply, the European Union will never again be what it was before February 24, 2022, as progressive, environmentalist, and activist. And that is the final positive of the Ukrainian war.

(Neviditeľný pes, František Novotný, 04. 26. 2022)

Immediate consequences

The future of Europe and especially Central Europe's energy policy is dependent on Russia and Germany. At least for now winter is over, but the end of the war in Ukraine is not in sight. As of now, Russia has cut gas exports to Poland and Bulgaria. Who will be next? The West's imposed sanctions on Russia, to regulate financial transactions, have had the greatest impact on a few Russian oligarchs. Russia in retaliation has imposed contra sanctions on EU gas customers. As of now, all payments must be in rubles, the Russian currency. Those who want or need to buy gas from Russia have to deposit Euros or dollars in Gazprom Bank. Since their currency is not internationally convertible, the exchange rate is controlled by the Russian central bank. It is they who set the official exchange rate and can print as many rubles as they want. This move is designed to drive a wedge into the unity of the EU.

The great game has begun. How it will end, or when it will end, only our LORD knows. We are praying that the situation will not lead to a larger military conflict where ABC (Atomic, Biological, Chemical) weapons might be used. It would be MAD.

PRAYER NEEDS

- Pray that this whole war situation will awaken all God's people, so that those who belong to Him from eternity may be drawn to Christ by the Father (John 6:44)
- Keep the recent conflict and the countries dependent on Russian oil in your prayers.
- What is happening now has immeasurable consequences for the way Europe has functioned so far.
- Our hope is in our LORD

**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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