

TRANSLATOR:

FIRST SPEAKER

Stanislaw Kawa (pronounced **Stan** is lav **Ka** va

Lviv = Luviv

Caritas Spes = **Karitas** Spase

Mokrzycki = Moe **krzi** ky

Mariupol = Marry **oo** pol

Kiev = Keev

Kharkiv = **Har** kiv

Kherson = **Her** sonn)

I am Fr. **Stanislaw Kawa**. I am a Conventual Franciscan, and I have been in Ukraine since 2013, so practically from the beginning of the war. My superiors decided to send me here since I was born in Ukraine. I am the superior of all the Conventual Franciscans here in the Ukraine and the president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. I am living in the convent in **Lviv**.. Sometimes I am confused with another Father **Kawa**. He is actually my blood brother and a brother in religion, also a Conventual Franciscan, Fr. Edward **Kawa**. He is the Auxiliary Bishop here in the Archdiocese of **Lviv**. We have the same parents, but we are different.

Since the end of February, we have been experiencing the war. In what way? Most of all because of the wave of refugees. At the beginning, it was a few million people many of whom passed by our convents, parishes and other Catholic institutions. Let me share just about our experience as Conventual Franciscans. In our convent here in **Lviv**, more or less, 20 people stop by a day. Some of them stay for one night or two nights. Others stayed a little longer. In two other convents we had initially up to 80 people of which 40 in one and 20 in another have stayed until now. We did not take any money from the people. We shared what we had and we were supported by **Caritas Spes**, local Catholic organization. Caritas Spes is the branch of the well known international Caritas organization. It happened that Archbishop **Mokrzycki** of **Lviv** and President of the Ukrainian Bishop's Conference, delegated my brother, Edward, to oversee all the humanitarian aid for the refugees in Ukraine. Together with the director of Caritas Spes, they must have done a good job because in the beginning Caritas was the only one to help. Their organization was exceptionally good. They received a lot of deliveries, especially food, and distributed further to other regions, especially to the East.

Although I was not directly involved, my estimate is that since the beginning of the war, over 400 large trucks with humanitarian aid passed by **Lviv**, many were further directed to **Mariupol, Kiev and Kharkiv** where people suffered most the consequences of the war.

Aid continues to arrive from Poland and from the West. The resources are stored and channeled to the places where people are in a dire situation even though the fighting might have moved elsewhere. Pastors in those locations know that they can ask Caritas Spes for help and in turn help people.

Let me say a few words how ordinary people are affected by the war?

I would say that the sound of the sirens has made the biggest impact and is stressful. Each time the sirens go off, people are anxious because they know they must go to the shelter. It might be 10 min, but it might also be a few hours. Sometimes we heard rockets or bombing that destroy the infrastructure and kill people. The worse is happening in the East: **Kharkov, Kherson and Mariupol**.

With the help of volunteers needed supplies are being distributed to the most needed population. We help everyone, not only Catholics. The war breaks any barriers.

The hardest impact is, of course, that some people are losing their life and others are injured. Just yesterday, when I got out from the convent and walked a few blocks, in the vicinity of a military hospital. There I met a father with his young daughter and the father was without his arm. Probably lost it recently in the combat.

At the very beginning, mostly the well-off left. Those who had some money, connection and could move to the west, moved through Poland go to the west or to the US. The second wave were people who feared the war. When the strike happened where they lived and the military combat started, they feared for their lives and left, moving from the East towards the West. And in the most recent weeks, we are seeing the wave of people who had suffered the consequences of the war. They have lost their minimal sense of safety. They lost their homes; their apartments were bombarded, sometimes their loved ones were killed. Their cities or villages were destroyed or ceased by Russians. They feared occupation by the Russian army, so they had to move and they fled.

Thank you for all the help we are getting.

It seems that the official government agency is conserving the food they received. Maybe they are waiting for even worse times. It seems that for the time being, the government's strategy is that as long as there is humanitarian aid from international organizations, NGO's, and the church are doing a good job, it is up to them to reach out to the people and help. I am far from accusing the government of not being willing to share the resources or of corruption or selling food, but we fear such possibilities.

SECOND SPEAKER

Lech Sprawka

Lech—Lech

Sprawka—Sprav ka

Voivodship—Voy vod ship

Morawiecki—Mora vecky

Zlotych—Zlot itch

My name is **Lech Sprawka**. I am the Governor of the State (known in Polish as a **voivodship**) of Lublin and so, a direct representative of Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz **Morawiecki**. Today, marks the 111th day of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

We started providing help immediately on February 24, 2022, the first day of the war. The time between the present and the beginning of the war can be divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of a speedy welcome of refugees and providing them with basic necessities. The second phase that is beginning now is to integrate them in the society.

Most refugees came in the first month of the war, until about the 3rd week of March. As of today, through the 4 border crossings that operate along the border of our state with Ukraine, about 1,700,000 refugees entered our state and Poland. At the height of the crisis, there were about 70,000 -80,000 people crossing the border every day. Now there is much less traffic – about 800-1200 new refugees per day. In the last three weeks, almost an equal number of refugees came to Poland and left Poland back to Ukraine. Since the time when Russian army withdrew from Kiev and the Kiev region it became relatively peaceful on the border.

At present about 55,000 refugees are registered with PESEL (equivalent of a US Social Security number) in our state. Even before the war there had been already some 80,000 Ukrainians in our state who came mostly to find employment. Many of the refugees stay with those who came before the war. This is one of the arrangements how refugees are being accommodated. Second group of refugees lives with Polish families who accepted them in their private apartments or homes. Third group of refugees stays in the places of mass accommodation created by the local and state government. Together in the state, we have about 15,000 places available for refugees. Currently, only about 6,000 are occupied. At the highest point of the war about 10,000 places were occupied. Refugees leave government provided shelters gradually; when they get a job, or are able to rent an apartment, slowly moving toward living a relatively normal life. Those shelters were created in hotels, motels, hostels, sports gyms converted for this purpose, or in student dormitories. This is a very diversified base of housing.

In the first phase, the main goal for the refugees was to quickly cross the border. After they arrived, they went to specially created reception points. At the beginning there were 10 reception points in the state, now there are only 4 active because fewer people cross the border. The reception points are shelters where refugees can stay for less than 24 hours. It is a place to rest, sleep, get food, medical help and information about moving to more permanent accommodation places where they could live life that is a bit more regular.

Everything is free for the refugees. The Polish government covers all the expenses. In the first phase, the President's Reserve Fund was used. Since March 12th resources are drawn from a special fund called 'Fund to Help Refugees from Ukraine'. These are all Polish resources to provide for the refugees. The funds are then divided by the Governor to the centers that need them most, those which provide services to the refugees.

The Lublin state so far spent 185 million **zlotych**, equivalent of 41.5 million USD as for today exchange rate. However, this amount does not reflect the total money spent. State's resources do not need to cover some benefits the refugees are eligible for like: special supplement for small children, in Poland called '500+' (~\$112 per child/month). These are funded on the federal level by social security. Education cost (tuition) and medical care are also centrally funded through national health fund and from the education budget. Ultimately, all of the funds come from the national budget but are distributed by different channels.

Let me tell you how the 41.5 million US Dollars that the state spent were distributed:

- permanent accommodation places for 6,000 refugees, on average – 57 million zlotych - 12,8 million US Dollars
- reception points – 22 million zlotych – 5 million US Dollars
- a large amount 74.5 million zlotych - 16.7 million US Dollars was allocated to Polish families who accepted refugees in their apartments and homes for free. These individuals could claim 40 zlotych, 9 for each refugee per day.
- support of the non-governmental organizations that serve refugees – 6.5 million zlotych – 1.5 million US Dollars. The money was spent mainly for food and hygiene articles made available to the refugees when they crossed the border.

The main NGO / charitable organizations that help in the state:

- -Caritas Lublin
- -Caritas Zamosc
- -Volunteer Center directed by Fr. Puzewicz in Lublin
- -Polish Red Cross

There was a question how costly assignment of the PESEL number to the refugees was. It was only \$38,000.

These are not all the resources that Poland invested in helping. As I mentioned earlier, the government directly provides for children education, '500+' additional income, medical and health care.

Poland passed a ruling that each Ukrainian has the same rights as a Polish citizen, as far as obtaining government help and participating in the economic and social life.

Each refugee also received a welcome gift 300 zlotych (\$67) as a one-time donation.

In these amounts neither humanitarian aid to the refugees nor help distributed in Ukraine is accounted for. The main source of humanitarian help until now were private donations and non-governmental organizations.

Let me point out the main difference in the way refugees are being accepted in Poland and in Western Europe in 2014/2015 – Poland does not set up refugee camps. I already mentioned the three arrangements refugees find housing: with Ukrainian families working in Poland prior to the war, with Polish families and in municipal – government shelters.

The second difference is that Ukrainian refugees were not forced to relocate. They freely choose where they would like to live more permanently. Some stayed in our state (about 80-100,000), some left for other places. We provided transportation for them. Still others left for some countries in Western Europe, and some left for the other hemisphere.

These are the two main characteristics that make a difference in welcoming refugees in Poland and in Western Europe.

Most of the refugees (about 85%) are women with children and elderly people. Currently, we work on helping them to become independent and on providing them with satisfactory living conditions, employment, and continuity of education for children.

THIRD SPEAKER

Agata Gula

I am Agata Gula, Director-General of the Governor's Office of Lublin and the proxy of the Governor regarding collaboration with NGOs.

In my presentation, I will focus on the main areas in which the NGOs operating in the state would welcome your support. I will base this presentation on my recent conversation with the Director of Caritas in Lublin. Together with the Governor, we are in constant contact with the different NGOs working in our state, so we know their needs.

I would like to reiterate what the Governor already stated that massive financial resources have been allocated from state and federal funds, from different ministries, and from NGOs, but the need to support the Ukrainian refugees continues.

The current pressing needs of the Ukrainian people in our state, but I assume it is very similar all over Poland, are the following:

- In the process toward self-sufficiency and independence, the essential step is to get the refugees out of mass accommodation places and shelters toward independent living. This means helping them with the search for apartments and possibly subsidizing rent for some 3 months. In the mass accommodation situation, it is hard for people to have initiative, to get out and do something. Often, they are overcome with apathy and lethargy, therefore, we need to find ways to house the people in private apartments. However, we encountered a problem. The housing market reacted to the influx of people and it is extremely dynamic. It is difficult to find an apartment. However, Caritas employed some real estate agents, housing assistants who will be able to help with the search. Initial help with rent payment will be their biggest need.
- The second need is related to general living needs. All NGOs agree that collecting and helping with material things is not always fitting. As an example, a lot of winter clothing was received in the spring. A lot of work for the NGOs, which did not satisfy the needs of the refugees. To meet people's real needs, money vouchers or gift cards are most useful. A person or family receiving a gift card can then purchase what they really need at that time.
- Emotional support for the refugees who after several months of experiencing the terror of the war suffer from PTSD. Caritas has employed two psychologists, psychotherapists, but they need many more because trauma is prevalent and the waiting list to see a specialist is very long. People have to regain their emotional and mental health before integrating in the society. This is a big need.
- Teaching Polish language to both kids and adults in order for them to adopt and integrate in the society: to be able to communicate, allow people to look for a job and get job training, and to learn about the Polish culture. Even if Poland and Ukraine are neighboring countries, the cultural differences are significant.
- Integration on the employment market. The refugees expressed the need to learn both Polish and English language. Certificates of matriculation of various documents are important to get the profile of the person, to know his/her skills. I want to commend the director of Caritas who already employed 30 Ukrainians to serve their refugees.

- There is a need for certified translators and these people have to be paid. After 111 days of the war, some volunteers have left. We understand people have to take care of their own lives too. The enthusiasm has been waning and their roles have to be taken by paid employees now.
- Legal assistance with filling out application forms for getting assistance, documents or employment application. Some of the refugees had their own businesses in Ukraine and they wish to start one in Poland. However, without legal/professional assistance, it might be extremely hard for them to get on the market.
- Activities for the children and youth. This group has the potential of integrating quickly but it is also a very sensitive group. The director of Caritas told me about the need for psychological support for this group. Child psychologists are a specialized group. Simultaneously, we need to purchase educational material, supplies, computers, and now think of summer activities. June 25th is the end of the school year in Poland. We need to provide activities for these children and youth during summer, so that they will not stay with their mothers only and go into lethargy or apathy. Supporting this group is very important.

I am very happy that our Caritas has the prospective to continue and to extend its activities helping the refugees. In summary, at present most of the resources are needed to employ specialists in order to activate people professionally and socially and integrate them in the society. Thank you.