

Reflections on World Politics: Ukraine - #18

John A. Bernbaum

June 25, 2022

Let's Make Bread!

The decision by Putin and his national security cronies to use wheat and other food supplies as a weapon against Ukraine, as well as endangering vulnerable communities in Africa and other regions who previously relied on food exports from Ukraine, has intensified Russia's pariah status. The brutality of Russia's war effort is evidenced in their mindless destruction of non-military targets that victimize non-combatants, especially the elderly and children.

The challenge facing the United States and our European allies is how to deal with these devastating crimes. The Russians are committing genocide and are unapologetic about it. How can we respond? The greatest need that the Ukrainians have is for more weapons, especially missile systems with a greater range, but there is little we can do about that other than to write our Congressional representatives and ask them to continue supplying the weapons so badly required in this struggle. But there is another area of pressing need where we can help in a practical way, and that is by supporting the organizations who are supplying food to those who have lost their homes, been forced to relocate, and now live separated from their husbands and fathers. Here are two extraordinary initiatives that are doing remarkable work and need our support:

Operation Harvest Hope: A Family for Every Orphan (AFFEO) has been working for years with orphans in Ukraine. One of their families served as foster parents for many years and trained older orphans to work with them in their small bakery. When the war broke out, they were able to purchase a German-made oven, mixer and other equipment, and began feeding people in their region from villages caught in the war zones. They are now able to bake another thousand loaves a day, which they sell at cost or give away to those with no money.

AFFEO also has a partner in a suburb of Kyiv where 6,000 refugees have been relocated. The staff of their café, who had experience working in orphan trauma care, expanded their capacity and began producing more than a thousand loaves of bread each day and, in the process, trained orphans how to work in their kitchen. While Ukrainian exports of wheat and other products are being blocked by the Russian navy in the Black Sea, Ukrainians have access to grain supplies in their country and are now expanding their production to feed many impoverished people.

AFFEO has plans to expand this program to several other cities and is also working with schools and churches to provide emergency food relief to children. For information about the costs of setting up an Operation Harvest Hope bakery (equipment, food supplies, operating space, and delivery of the equipment), check AFFEO's website at (www.afamilyforeveryorphan.org). The website will also explain how you can support this creative ministry by check, credit cards, or

direct transfers. Note that your gift is for “Operation Harvest Hope – Ukraine.” The genius of their strategy is not only to feed hungry people, but also to equip older orphans by giving them employable skills.

Bread of Life Bakeries: Mission Eurasia began its bakery project in 2016 in eastern Ukraine, when it reached out to provide physical and spiritual nourishment for those suffering from the ongoing war started by pro-Russian forces. Six full bakeries and one-mini bakery were established in Ukraine, each of which produced at least 1,000 loaves of bread per day, while providing jobs to the unemployed in the region.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, five of these seven bakeries were destroyed by Russian soldiers, but two were able to remove their equipment and relocate further to the west. Mission Eurasia subsequently used their experience to establish Bread of Life Bakeries in Armenia and Moldova and recently opened their first bakery in western Ukraine.

Mission Eurasia’s School Without Walls program is tied into the bakery project, as students and other volunteers help to deliver the bread and learn how to share the “bread of life” with the people they serve. You can learn more about this exciting Mission Eurasia initiative by visiting their website (www.missioneurasia.org) and make donations by check, credit card, or direct transfers. Note that your gift is for “Bread of Life Bakeries.”

Let’s Be Breadmakers: These essays are not written as an academic exercise for me but are driven by my desire to support our Ukrainian friends. I encourage you to join me in supporting one or both bakery projects – it is such a practical way to demonstrate our support for them and to give them hope as the war drags on. Russians continue their devastation of villages and cities in the east using massive missile and artillery attacks - and recent reports indicate that they are burning wheat fields. Let’s not sit passively by. Let’s counter their brutality by being people who are agents of God’s amazing grace. Let’s make bread!

When this war ends and peace allows the rebuilding process to begin, maybe some of us can gather together and have a cup of coffee and some fresh bread in the bakeries we supported!

These “Reflections” are circulated approximately once a week. If you want to have your name added to our mailing list, let me know (johnbernbaum@gmail.com); you can unsubscribe at any time. All of these “Reflections” can be found on Dr. Bernbaum’s website (www.johnabernbaum.org), along with many other resources.