



By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

WALLY SKALIJ/
LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine — which turned 10 months old on Christmas Eve — has been tough on everyone involved. While Russia made tremendous advances on the ground the first several weeks, a tough Ukrainian defense has managed to push them back time and time again.

Meanwhile, the people of Ukraine have dealt with deliberate Russian attacks on civilian targets and the largest refugee exodus of the past 60 years.

Ukrainian refugees gathered at the main train station in Przemysl, Poland, on March 6. Thousands of refugees passed through this train station on their way to other destinations.

FEB. 23: RUSSIA ATTACKS UKRAINE

Russian President Vladimir Putin viewed the dissolution of the Soviet Union 30 years ago with disapproval. Like many Russians, he considers Ukraine to be part of Russia and Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, to be the birthplace of the old Soviet Union. Putin considers NATO’s interest in expanding eastward — and possibly into Ukraine itself — to be a threat to Russian national security.

After pro-Democracy protesters overthrew Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014, Putin responded by annexing the Crimean peninsula along the Black Sea and territory in the far southeast part of Ukraine.

In November 2021, NATO detected a Russian buildup of troops and materiel along the border with Ukraine. By the end of that month, as many as 92,000 Russian troops were poised along the border.

After weeks of further buildup and military exercises along the border, Putin made a TV address in which he criticized Ukrainian efforts to “decommunize” their country by removing monuments to Vladimir Lenin. “We are ready to show you what real decommunization means for Ukraine,” he threatened.

Three days later, Russian troops began pouring across the border. Putin warned the West that any interference would face immediate consequences.

The flow of civilian refugees was hampered by bombardments and shelling from Russian forces. In some cases, Russia agreed to create evacuation corridors for civilians to leave populated areas but then bombed those corridors anyway.

RUSSIAN-HELD TERRITORY IN MARCH ...



... AND IN DECEMBER



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Within a few weeks, Russia had advanced on about a fifth of the country. Ukraine — led by comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose claim to fame before his election in 2019 had been playing the president of Ukraine on a political satire TV series — wasn’t giving up easily.



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Volodymyr Zelenskyy

In September, Ukraine launched a surprise counterattack, routing Russian troops from the territory they had captured and liberating a number of Ukrainian cities.

Russia has been sending troops into battle with poor equipment and inadequate training. Soldiers report not having enough food or ammunition and having to resort to Wikipedia for instructions on how to use their weapons or for other technical information.

They’ve also been known to use their cellphones to call home, allowing Ukrainian forces to zero in on their positions.

Over the past few weeks, Russia knocked out major Ukrainian power generation stations. Ukraine is warning this was in preparation for a major ground offensive this winter.

2,852,395 Russian Federation As of Oct. 3

WHERE REFUGEES ARE GOING IN EUROPE

Millions of Ukrainian civilians have fled the country and millions more have moved within Ukraine to positions far away from the invasion. This has led to the largest refugee crisis in 62 years.

1,529,355 Poland As of Dec. 13

1,021,667 Germany As of Nov. 22

Czech Republic 467,862 As of Dec. 6

Italy 173,231 As of Dec. 6

Spain 156,753 As of Dec. 6

United Kingdom 147,800 As of Nov. 29

France 118,994 As of Oct. 31

Slovakia 102,873 As of Dec. 13

Romania 98,103 As of Dec. 11

Moldova 98,027 As of Dec. 13

Austria 89,244 As of Dec. 6

Netherlands 79,250 As of Sept. 30

Lithuania 71,367 As of Dec. 6

Switzerland 70,730 As of Dec. 6

Estonia 63,850 As of Dec. 6

Belgium 62,181 As of Nov. 29

Ireland 58,511 As of Dec. 6

Portugal 52,970 As of Oct. 3

Bulgaria 51,516 As of Nov. 29

TEN LARGEST REFUGEE CRISES SINCE 1960

Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022 7.83 M

Syrian civil war 2011-Present 6.88 M

Afghan civil wars 1989-1996 6.34 M

Afghan-Soviet war 1979-1989 5.64 M

Political and economic turmoil in Venezuela 2014-Present 5.08 M

Taliban regime in Afghanistan 1996-2001 3.84 M

Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan 2002-2021 3.09 M

Derg regime in Ethiopia 2002-2021 2.57 M

South Sudanese civil war 2013-2020 2.45 M

Iraqi War 2003-2012 2.34 M

REFUGEES IN THE U.S. AND IN SPOKANE

In April, President Joe Biden announced the Uniting for Ukraine program. Ukrainians who qualified were granted immediate humanitarian parole to live and work in the U.S. for at least two years as long as they had sponsors here vowing to support them financially.

Response has been strong:

■ 171,000 applications to be sponsors

■ 121,000 travel authorizations for Ukrainians

■ Roughly 85,000 refugees have come to the U.S. since April.

About 2,500 of those refugees have come to Spokane, which was already home to about 50,000 Slavs — many of whom fled religious persecution between the 1980s and the early 2000s.

Sources: Pew Research, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, The Spokesman-Review, CNN, the Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Vox.com, Reuters