

FRONTPAGE

REGION

'People are getting tired'

Ukrainians in Western Mass. continue relief efforts, skeptical of talks with Russia

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Tables in area church social halls were stacked three years ago with donated supplies for Ukraine.

Shelf-stable food. Warm clothing. Military-style first aid kits. All destined for collection points where it'd get packed into shipping containers and sent to Ukrainians straining under the weight of Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion.

Bethesda Ukrainian Pentecostal Church in West Springfield raised and donated \$90,000 for Ukraine in just the first year of the war, buying relief supplies and even military equipment like night vision goggles and two drone aircraft.

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"But now people are getting tired, more than anything else," said Bethesda Senior Pastor Peter

Mosijchuk. Tired and worried that America's support for Ukraine will falter amid talks Tuesday in Saudi Arabia between Russia and officials of the Trump administration.

"Behind Ukraine's back," Mosijchuk said. "He makes Putin as a peacemaker."

Mosijchuk and members of his congregation are still in contact with family back home. He talks about ruined cities. He talks about lives lost.

“Why would you talk to dictators? Aggressors?” Mosijchuk said. “Try to make it like they want peace.”

“Ukraine is going to keep fighting.”

Russia and the U.S. agreed Tuesday to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and to improving their diplomatic and economic ties. Russia and the U.S. agreed to return staffing to each others' embassies an to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties.

Ukraine

And with the third anniversary, groups here in the Pioneer Valley are marking it with panel discussions and demonstrations at the Northampton office of the U.S. Rep. James P. McGovern, D-Worcester.

The Rev. Andriy Krip of Saint Peter and Saint Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ludlow said people in his congregation are reacting to changes in U.S.-Russian or U.S.Ukrainian relations in different ways.

“There are different moods,” Krip said. “Some Republicans. Some are Democrats. We all hope for the good outcome.”

Anna Nagurney, the Eugene M. Isenberg Chair in Integrative Studies at Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said the Ukrainian American community, like the nation, was split in November.

“I believe that many Ukrainian Americans, while expecting some policy shifts, did not anticipate the abrupt shift of the U.S. policy on Russia’s war on Ukraine nor did they expect the radical change in the U.S. relationship with its European allies,” she said, Ukrainian Americans, like many others in the U.S., are holding their breath as to

what comes next. Many are not convinced that the war can be ended with a positive result for Ukraine by just “negotiations” between the U.S. and Russia and without the presence of Ukraine and Europe.”

Nagurney was born in Canada to a family that fled Ukraine after World War II. Ukrainian was her first language and she follows the country closely as a professor on the board at the Kyiv School of Economics.

Nagurney’s program here is now into the second year of having exchange students from the Kyiv school with them at UMass Amherst.

“Some have, of course, shared their concerns for the safety of their families and peers back in Ukraine,” Nagurney said. “While it goes unmentioned, I’m sure that they all know someone who is serving in the defense of their country. At least one lives roughly the same distance from the frontlines with Russia as Springfield is from Amherst.”

The KSE exchange students are doing a panel discussion from 4 to 5 p.m. Feb. 27 in Room 210 of the Isenberg School of Management at UMass.

Calling for negotiations, Massachusetts Peace Action’s Ukraine Peace Campaign will parade a “doomsday clock” from noon to 12:45 p.m. Monday, Feb. 2, to McGovern’s offices, 94 Pleasant St., Northampton,

“Speakers will focus on the urgent need for peace, for ending the war, and for stopping the risk of it escalating into a direct confrontation between the US/ NATO and Russia, which could become a catastrophic nuclear war,” said John Berkowitz, member of Massachusetts Peace Action’s Ukraine Peace Campaign, in a news release.

McGovern traveled with a delegation to Ukraine to meet Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy in May 2022.