

# Christian Radio for Russia & Ukraine

Sponsor of the New Life Radio Satellite Network—Odessa, Ukraine  
Serving the Slavic world with Christian truth through Biblical programming

February 2023



www.CRFR.org

PROCLAIMING the GOSPEL in the midst of war



It has been nearly a year since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has been a year of terrible devastation, suffering, and death. Yet in this environment, God has seen fit to protect, equip, and bless the work of New Life Radio as they endeavor to share the Christian faith to these warring nations.



February 24, 2022 will forever be remembered as a day that will mark the memory of generations of Russians and Ukrainians. A day in which hatred and evil engulfed brotherly nations. The world sees little solution to overcoming these facts, but this is where the GOSPEL shines its light toward a sinful, suffering mankind, offering hope, forgiveness and restoration. This is the message we are privileged to share over our broadcast channels.

When Russian bombs whizzed past Odessa, CRFR asked NLR station manager Ivan Zhurakovski if he would be willing to take his family and radio equipment across the border to Moldova, in order to save our network. That was February 28<sup>th</sup>. He fled to Chisinau with a car he had obtained a day before the war; was informed he could not remain there, and miraculously found a willing church to help him in Iasi, Romania. In the meantime, some NLR staff chose to leave to assist in other places, and the studios were down to one man (Yuri Ignatenko). As the Russian military invaded on multiple fronts across Ukraine, NLR continued their satellite and Internet broadcasts uninterrupted, relying heavily on our radio automation equipment and trusting God that bombs would not hit our studios located in the Odessa Christian Economic University.

Sadly, the war was causing the systematic destruction of cities and villages, including hundreds of churches, with Russian forces specifically targeting over 170 evangelical churches. Orthodox cathedrals did not escape shelling as well. Large numbers of pastors left their congregations for safety or other reasons, including seminary staffs, leaving a void in Christian leadership at a time when it was most needed. Fortunately, NLR was able to beam its 24/7 signal into every community, providing needed Bible instruction and encouragement to people facing death while asking the bigger questions about life itself. And for these questions, we had an answer and the extending of HOPE that only comes from a loving God.

Over the spring and summer, NLR broadcast from two separate locations (Odessa and Iasi) and by September, we relocated our remote studio

again, this time to Budapest, Hungary. While short staffed, CRFR understood the necessity of developing a new radio service in the Ukrainian language as that nation saw a rejection of all things Russian, including its language, culture, and media. *Radio Nove Zhittya* (RNZ) went on the air that month as an automated radio channel on the internet, waiting for further development as CRFR seeks a new missionary radio staff to expand it. The NLR studios were now set to operate two radio networks and continue its outreach to both Russia and Ukraine.



September and October witnessed new attacks on Odessa and by the late fall, the biggest challenge for NLR was keeping its transmissions going as electrical power was subject to interruptions. The NLR remote studio could be employed at any moment to take over the radio network, and did so on a daily basis. **photo: Eve on air from NLR-Iasi**



During this time, NLR continued its role as a spiritual link between Christians in each country, using its various programs to remind listeners of our unity in Christ and ultimate loyalty to His Kingdom. Listener request hours featured daily greetings from people scattered from Siberia to Kiev, from Belarus to cities across Europe, many of which now house millions of Ukrainian refugees seeking to stay connected to their homeland and their Christian families. And with this audience, NLR provided sound Biblical instruction relating to life amidst a war experience, giving people an understanding of how to deal with the war and the evil around them from a Christ-centered perspective.

With constant prayer support from Christians in many countries around the world, the NLR team felt strengthened in their role to be Christ communicators and to be bold despite various crises confronted our staffing, operations, and logistics.



**Oksana, Ivan & Natalie Z.**  
at NLR-Budapest, Hungary

Wartime brings out the best in many, and we are thankful for how the Lord has used Ivan and Yuri to oversee our ministry despite huge obstacles. In October, NLR was forced by new federal regulations to reorganize its non-profit entity, so CRFR's Dan & Oksana Johnson went to Odessa and resolved a number of legal issues that laid the groundwork for NLR's long term work.

As the war progressed and seemingly escalated, NLR staff worked from the perspective that our broadcasts would be increasingly needed in the future, not only to strengthen and mature disciples, but to reach out to distressed populations among both warring countries with the claims of Christ. Russia and Ukraine (before the war) had little Christian radio available to them, with 98 and 97% respectively of total communities *without* a local evangelical Christian radio station. While the lack of press freedom in Russia can limit our future work there, and despite new press laws in Ukraine (in December 2022) impacting both media and Russian language usage controls, CRFR is committed to a strategy to establish a truly national radio network for Ukraine when the war ends, using a combination of Internet and satellite to provide the backbone for new local FM radio affiliates of *Radio Nove Zhittya*. This effort will require new CRFR donors to help us fund three radio missionaries, plus transmission costs (total: \$5,200/month). We only seek God's will to be done in this!

**AS 2023** commenced, the doors to ministry in Budapest began to close as Ivan and family did not receive permission from the state to remain there. Just as in Chisinau months before, when pressed to find a new location and God giving us a wonderful Christian support network in Iasi, Ivan asked Dan to investigate options to move to nearby Austria. Given that Odessa experienced new and longer electrical shutdowns due to Russian attacks, maintaining a remote studio was critical. Not knowing anyone in Austria, Dan did an Internet search for Christians in Linz, Austria; found the name of a pastor who helped coordinate an alliance of churches in the city; then sent him an appeal letter for believers in the city to help NLR find an apartment for Ivan and a studio to broadcast from.

The next morning, Pastor Martin responded with an offer of support for an apartment and suggestions for a studio! They were already prepared for Ivan, and within a few days, Ivan, his wife Natalie, and three small children boarded a train from Budapest to Linz. Shortly afterward, they found a house with two floors offered by a couple named Maria and Dan with all the room they needed for their family AND a studio! The Linz Christian community gave the Zhurakovskis a wonderful welcome and logistical support, while CRFR donors came forward at that moment to provide the funds needed to cover NLR's costs in Linz for their time there. It was a beautiful sign of God's people, from many nations, coming together to do the work needed to equip missionaries to communicate the Gospel, in this case to a troubled Slavic world at war. NLR is now set to continue its broadcasts uninterrupted, switching between Odessa and Linz.



**new home of NLR-Linz, Austria**

Speaking of Odessa, CRFR is grateful to announce the addition of three new radio missionaries to our Russian language staff, bringing us back to full strength almost a year since the war started. In the first week of February, we were joined by Sasha Khristov, Ilia Horbatiuk, and Ola Barchinko. All three have served as youth ministry leaders in a local Odessa church and are excited about their new opportunity to share Christ to a much wider audience! We ask for prayers that God may give them the discernment, maturity, creativity, and strength to take on the daily tasks of this very difficult, yet rewarding mission work.



**Ilia, Sasha, Ola, and Yuri—Odessa staff**

### **CURRENT NEEDS:**

- NLR still is looking for a Program Director for our RNZ Ukrainian channel to develop it
- Prayer that NLR stays strong and remains effective as this war continues to escalate.
- Listen to NLR at **www.NLRadio.net** and RNZ at **www.Novezhitya.net**

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