

News; Domestic

THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW for March 10, 2022, MSNBC

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[21:00:09]

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC HOST: That is "ALL IN" in on this Thursday night.

THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW starts with Ali Velshi right now.

Good evening, Ali.

ALI VELSHI, MSNBC HOST: Hey, Chris, that was a remarkably poignant point, that comes up in Marie Yovanovitch's book, the idea that Volodymyr Zelenskyy was an untested creature, and now, he is becoming a global hero.

Chris, thanks, and we'll talk to you again tomorrow night.

HAYES: You bet.

VELSHI: And thanks to you at-home for joining us this hour. I'm outside of a train station in Zahony, Hungary, tonight. As you can see, trains coming, and going, and this is where Ukrainian refugees have been lining up, to board the trains to Budapest, or any other destination on the departure's board.

Incidentally, this train is headed towards Ukraine. There are some people who are heading back, and I will explain to you why that's happening a little later in the show. But most people, the overwhelming majority of them, are here to get as far away from the war that displace them.

It's 3:00 in the morning here and trains are leaving the station 24 hours a day. So, fair warning, as you recall from last night, you might hear some background noise, or some announcements over the loudspeaker, over the course of the hour tonight.

Well, let's go to Ukraine. And the center of Odesa in Ukraine, there's a set of stairs. They are called the Potemkin Stairs. They're kind of a grand entrance to the center of the city. At the top of the stairs is a monument, a statue of the Duke de Richelieu, the founder of the city. It's the first monument that was ever built in Odesa, Ukraine's third largest city. It has been there since the 1800s.

Here's what it looks like today. Ukrainian soldiers have buried the entire thing in sandbags. With just the duke's head, and outstretched arm, poking out of the top. It is an attempt to protect this historic statue from Russian forces that are advancing on that city.

Now, look, this is a mainly symbolic gesture, trying to shield the heart of their city. Sandbags are, clearly, no match for bombs. But, it is an emotional gesture, nonetheless, as Ukraine's major cities continue to brace for impact.

Russia's advance on Kyiv has remained stalled for days. But a senior Defense Department official tells NBC News tonight that despite the setbacks, Russia has made moderate operational advances around Kyiv in the last 24 hours.

Current U.S. estimates predict that Russia will fully encircle Ukraine's capital in the next week or so. And so, for now, it is suburbs all around Kyiv that continue to get hit the hardest. This was the Romaniski (ph) Bridge

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in the city of Irpin today. It is a suburb west of Kyiv. More than 1,000 people, and at least 100 children, were evacuated from under a bridge, after it was bombed out, in an attempt to slow Russia's advance into the city.

Police help them cross the rubble, and get into a series of buses to try to get to the safety, and to see what they are traversing is plywood. That is the top of the Irpin River. They were elderly women, men, and the wheelchairs.

A Ukrainian soldier found a burnt up Russian passport at the evacuation site. It should be noted that refugees all over the country are making this arduous journey in the bitter cold, with just a coat on their backs, and whatever else they can carry besides their own children, almost everyone is arriving with children.

This is along side -- a random side of the road, in the region near the capital. Parents carrying children on their shoulders, pulling them along in them along in strollers or wagons. Kyiv's suburbs have been under constant Russian shelling for days now.

NBC's Richard Engel filed this raw report from Irpin today, where the front lines are blurry at best.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RICHARD ENGEL, NBC NEWS CHIEF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: Here we go. We are now locked and loaded up, all of the soldiers, because the Russians control part of this district. The Ukrainians control other parts. The front line isn't straight. There are pockets.

There are many abandoned cars here in Irpin. People who just left them behind as they escape the area, and the soldiers have just been going through, looking for cars with keys and them, and gas. Now, we have transport.

The streets here are completely empty. The biggest risk is that you turn a corner, and there are Russians, a Russian tank, a Russian APC, so everyone's driving cautiously and with their eyes open.

And this is the center of Irpin, very few people around, although, a few have stayed, for now.

[21:05:04]

You think you're going to leave soon?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Soon.

ENGEL: Soon?

The lack of people here, creating opportunities for looters. The volunteers catch a few suspected looters, who had alcohol in their backpacks. And the local mayor, not having any of it.

Russia continues to insist that it is targeting civilians, and not bombing civilian areas, but just on the outskirts of Kyiv, you can see, entire areas have been wiped out, and more strikes are happening right now.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: Now, near him, in the city of Chernihiv, the mayor said today that his city is fully encircled by Russian troops. Russian shelling, destroying the pipes. So, the entire city without heat, or cooking gas.

Some neighborhoods have no clean water. The mayor says there is limited room to bury the dead, so they are putting five coffins in every grave. For the thousands of people who remain alive in the city, the mayor says, they have no place to live.

The city of Mariupol continues to get slammed. The day after the Russia announced a direct strike at a maternity and children's hospital. Ukrainian authorities have now confirmed that three people were killed in that attack, and at least 17 more were injured. The Ukrainian government says because of the heavy fighting, not a single civilian was able to evacuate Mariupol today.

Sky News' Alex Crawford has this affecting report from outside Kyiv tonight and how the region is dealing with the scores of injured soldiers and civilians.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ALEX CRAWFORD, SKY NEWS REPORTER (voiced-over): Their lives stuffed into car boots, and on the back seats, they are taking some terrible hits, trying to stop the Russian troops, entering the Ukrainian capital. Laying out and already blood soaked structures. The soldiers have just been shelled on the front line, creeping ever closer to Kyiv.

It is the nearest hospital, and now entirely turned over to dealing with the war wounded. These aren't army medics, near the town's doctors, and nurses, who two weeks ago, we're dealing with births, and bone breaks.

Now, they are plunged into a new world, and spinning the lives of civilians, torn apart by bombs, and bullets.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's World War III.

CRAWFORD: It's World War III?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's World War III. And it won't just stop here. It will move towards (INAUDIBLE). Please help us stop this now.

CRAWFORD: They're shell-shocked, and shaking. And so far, the politicians' peace talks have got nowhere. Hospitals are protected locations on the international law. But no one here trust that to be observed. Yet, there is astonishing resilience, and perhaps the realization they have no option.

It's not difficult for us to fight, he tells us. We are defending our land, and will continue to protect it.

Then, he delivers a rousing call. Not just for our fellow Ukrainian men and women, but also the rest of the world. Everyone has to stand together, he says.

Glory to Ukraine, our army will win.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: Glory to Ukraine, it is actually something I hear from so many of the refugees, who I meet, even here in Hungary.

For now, with the Russians inching closer, Kyiv, and its surrounding suburbs, remaining under Ukrainian control. It is not to read the entire country, however. The city of Kherson was the first of all since Russia -- since the start of the Russian invasion. Kherson has been under Russian control for almost two weeks now.

NBC's Matt Bradley has a report from there tonight. What it looks like in the parts of Ukraine that have transition from being under attack, to being under occupation.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATT BRADLEY, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Kherson, Ukraine, offering the first glimpses of Russia's occupation. After two weeks, Kherson is the first and only major city to fall to Russian forces.

Last week, its residents were proudly protesting against Russian troops. But, that is all changed.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Not only do they blockade us from food, and medicine, and basic necessities, but also, they are prepared to imprison those who disagree, and those who protest.

BRADLEY: Four hundred people were arrested yesterday, according to the Ukrainian military, there is one that local residents else, is the appearance of the Rosgvardiya, Russia's national guard. This paramilitary force, created in 2016, answering directly to President Putin.

They are mostly deployed in Russia as riot police. Now, they are in Kherson, suppressing dissent, the same way they do when Russia. In this video of a protest, Russia's version of a police wagon.

[21:10:02]

The national guard are checking social media, looking around for their apartments, Kherson's mayor said. They're even looking for the people who were fighting against Russians in 2014. The city is being strangled. The mayor says they have about a week of food left.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: Today, peace talks between Russia, and Ukraine, broke down, without any promises of peace fire, or protected evacuation corridors for civilians. The talks were in every sense, a failure. They lasted just 90 minutes.

Today was day 15, with no diplomatic events. What will day 16 bring?

Joining us live from Lviv is NBC News correspondent, my friend, Cal Perry.

Cal, what else can you tell us about the breakdown in peace talks today?

CAL PERRY, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: You know, it was interesting to hear from the Ukrainian foreign minister in a post-press conference. He said he didn't feel like Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia, even have the power to negotiate. He said he didn't think he wasn't even authorized to discuss anything in particular. So, it was virtually a waste of time.

One thing that did happen, though, the director general of the IAEA there. A little unusual for the director of the IAEA to show up at peace talks, but he did so, out of concern for what's happening in Chernobyl.

Now, there will be, we understand, for the Russian ministry of defense. They will open a corridor to allow Ukrainian engineers getting to Chernobyl, to restore power to the site, while the IAEA says there's no danger right now, they are worried in the future.

I want to touch briefly on the city of Kharkiv, because we are seeing there, what we saw play out in Mariupol. A BBC news crew was able to get to the center of the city today, so, we have a video where we're seeing not only Russian soldiers laying in the streets dead, but a number of civilians. That city, now under bombardment, no power, no heat, and it's a humanitarian catastrophe.

Both the Red Cross, and Doctors Without Borders want to get to that site. They've been unable to get to mostly any of these cities, Ali, as the conditions are only deteriorating.

VELSHI: Cal, thanks for your coverage. Thanks to you and your team. Everybody, please stay safe where you are. Cal Perry, live in Lviv tonight.

Well, since the start of the invasion, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has literally begged the United States, and NATO, to enforce a no fly zone over his country. More recently, and come out to supply his country with MiG fighter jets. But so far, those requests have been denied.

This week, the Pentagon sent two patriot surface-to-air missile batteries, not to Ukraine, but to Poland, to protect NATO's eastern flank. Those are weapons that the Ukrainian president would, desperately, love to see inside of his own country. Instead, for now, the U.S. and Western allies, have been sending Ukraine thousands of anti-tank Javelins, and anti-aircraft Stinger missiles, both of which are used to tremendous effect by Ukrainian soldiers who are on the frontlines. But, as Russia ramps up its attacks on civilian targets, like hospitals, as we showed you, in schools, pressure is growing on the United States to close the gap between what Ukraine wants, and the military hardware that NATO allies are willing to provide.

Joining us now live from Ukraine, is Andriy Zagorodnyuk. He is the former Ukrainian minister of defense. He is the cofounder, and chairman of the security think tank, Center for Defense Strategies.

Mr. Zagorodnyuk, thank you for being with us.

You and I talked earlier to this week when we first got news that this Polish exchange of airplanes would not happen. I want you to help me understand. It's been years since Ukraine wanted more lethal weaponry from the West. It has not been forthcoming until recently.

But at this point, what is happening with the respect to the skies over Ukraine. Ukraine does have an air force. Are there fights going on between Ukrainian air force pilots, and Russian air force pilots?

ANDRIY ZAGORODNYUK, FORMER UKRAINIAN DEFENSE MINISTER: Yes, of course. There has been some fights where there were quite successful for Ukraine. So, Ukraine has downed tens of aircrafts. That included transport jets, and also fighter jets, and helicopters, and so on.

But overall capability, air defense capability of Ukrainian forces not enough to counter all attacks across the country. So, it does need an enhancement. That is what our president is talking about, over and over again. But so far, it is not a success. They do want to see it as soon as possible.

VELSHI: The U.S. Defense Department has said two things. He said this deals with Poland, to move their jets into Germany, and have them sent to Ukraine is not tenable. But, they also said that it won't, fundamentally, affect the outcome.

Tell me about -- if the idea is you need the skies above clear, to not bombed cities, to let people evacuate, or to even give Ukrainian forces a fighting chance against the Russians. What is tenable in your opinion? What can happen that can bolster Ukrainian forces?

[21:15:04]

ZAGORODNYUK: Tenable is a combination of complaints, and the anti-aircraft systems. So, we've been talking about all of this for a while though. Right now, there is issues who the Ukrainian armed forces and Ukrainian defense ministry, and in the U.S., of course.

So, there has been a number of options, a multiple combinations of equipment, which could be installed with transferred to Ukraine to resolve this issue, at least partially. So, these talks are going on for a while, and they are not coming up with the constructive solutions. So, the main thing that we, need right now, is to save time, and to finally make a decision. There has been discussions over and over with specialists for days now, and before that.

So, I'm just calling for a quicker solution than what we see right now.

VELSHI: The Ukrainian forces are well-trained. They have fighter pilots obviously. They receive these Javelins, in the Stinger missiles, and they have some training and being able to use it. There was a request for Patriot missiles.

The Ukrainian army is substantially smaller than the Russian army. It's got less material, it's got less equipment. If you get the stuff that you need, do you have the people to operate that stuff to effect against the Russian forces?

ZAGORODNYUK: We do have people, yes, and also being smaller doesn't mean that you are using. We need to be more efficient and more motivated and we need to know the area better, and so on.

So, as we have shown in the case of the land forces, we can be more efficient than Russians, and we can actually win. So far, Russians are not reaching their strategic objectives, and operational objectives in Ukraine. So it's not a question of us not being able to defend ourselves, we just need equipment. And that's been said over and over again already.

VELSHI: Let's talk about what this defense looks like at this point. We do know, and we're going to talk about it later in the show, their controls on Russia on what kind of information is coming out. Russians will tell you they have lost far less in terms of ammunitions and jets, and soldiers. But the bottom line is, there are people in Russia who are saying, what is this war for? Why are we doing this? Why are we suffering economically? Why are we suffering militarily?

How long do you think Ukraine can hold out while the tide turn against Vladimir Putin, if that tide turns?

ZAGORODNYUK: We can hold for a while because we have people who are absolutely determined, as you can see, for success and winning. This whole campaign has no sense whatsoever -- the only reason why it's because Putin wants to turn Ukraine into a subjected state, or some colony, or whatever.

And people in Ukraine, absolutely all of them, are against that. We want to be an independent country. We want to be a European democracy.

And all of the people are absolutely motivated to fight. So the west has been with us for all this time and currently, this delay with a solution, indeed, it's frustrating. As you can see, we are losing people, including civilians on a daily basis. But we are absolutely motivated to fight. There is no doubt about that whatsoever.

VELSHI: Andriy Zagorodnyuk, thank you for joining me. Mr. Zagorodnyuk is a former Ukrainian minister of defense.

Much more to get to tonight, I will be speaking to some of the people I met here on the Ukrainian border with Hungary, where some of the millions have fled Ukraine. But coming up next, I'm going to talk to a leading Russian opposition figure, what he thinks is key to getting Vladimir Putin out of power.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:23:06]

VELSHI: "The Washington Post" published a massive piece of reporting today based on interviews with 17 Biden administration officials, diplomats, policymakers, and experts. Those 17 different Biden administration officials say the administration sees, quote, no clear end to the military phase, end quote, of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The new challenge of the Biden administration, and their eyes, is to try to control the uncontrollable, Russian president Vladimir Putin and his end game. Putin is one -- the one person in the world with the unilateral ability to end this war. And since he does not appear willing to negotiate seriously at this stage, the question becomes, can anyone in Russia make him?

At least, roughly 14,000 anti-war protesters have already been arrested in Russia, and almost all of Russia's independent media and social media has either been shuttered or muzzled, unable to report the reality of what is happening in Ukraine, unable to even refer to it as a war.

Any truthful information that gets through is quickly spun by Russian controlled state media. Take for instance this photo. Two weeks ago today, on the first day of the Russian invasion, Russian forces fired on a high rise apartment building in the suburbs of Kharkiv. This woman who is 53 years old and a teacher was injured when a fallen shell of America sliced her face. Images of her quickly made it to the front pages across western media, but in Russian media they called the image of fake saying the woman was a crisis actor, and that, quote the blood turned out to be either makeup or ordinary grape or pomegranate juice, end quote.

[21:25:01]

That is quite some journalism here, it's either makeup or pomegranate juice.

They claimed she was actually Ukrainian special forces operative, faking everything to make Russia look bad. Just yesterday, a Russian air travel hit a maternity hospital in Mariupol, killing two adults and one child and wounding 17 others. But in the Russian press, the story is either that the hospital was empty, or more nefariously, that Ukrainian military did at themselves, firing artillery strikes on their own civilian infrastructure.

Now, with state media lying this aggressively and all alternative sources shut down, how can the Russian people be expected to oppose what Putin is doing, let alone voice that opposition?

Well, Russian opposition leader karna thinks this question is key. Kara- Murza has been a new effective force in resisting Russia over the years that the Kremlin poisoned him not once, but twice to try to get rid of him.

This was Kara-Murza's advice in "The Washington Post" this week. Quote, as the world's democracies rightly prioritize helping Ukraine withstand Putin's aggression, they should not overlook the other important task, helping Russian citizens gain access to objective information about the war and the Putin regime in general.

Democratic nations must step up efforts to provide news coverage for Russian citizens in the Russian language. Western leaders are learning the hard way that the instability, repression and conflict Putin is causing will resolve only when he is out of power. Only Russians can and should achieve this. The least the world's democracies can do is help them get access to the truth, end quote.

Joining us now is the Russian opposition politician, Vladimir Kara-Murza. He is in Washington this week for meetings with members of Congress, a trip that took him two days to accomplish because of the closed airspace on the journey to D.C. from Moscow.

Mr. Kara-Murza, thank you. Thank you so much for being with us tonight.

You just left Moscow --

VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA, RUSSIAN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN: Thank you so much for having me.

VELSHI: -- a few days ago. We understand that Russian state media is spinning this war.

Help us understand, Vladimir, as you often do, how effective that spin is? What percentage of the Russian population buys into what the Putin government is saying, especially since they are seeing inflation, high interest rates and all sorts of other effects to their daily lives?

KARA-MURZA: You just mentioned the word war, just for doing that, you could get up to 15 years in prison and Russia that was a law passed last week, it's criminal to be opposite to this war but also mentioning that there is a war. It's a totally Orwellian reality that we are living with in Russia.

George Orwell's 1984 really did come to life under Vladimir Putin's regime. One piece, a famous line from Orwell's novel. It's astonishing and it makes me proud that there are thousands of people across Russia, as you've just shown to your viewers a few moments ago, who have been protesting, they've been all over the streets all over the country, in cities and towns across Russia, saying, this is not our war. These war crimes, these crimes against humanity that the Putin regime is unleashing on the nation of Ukraine, in the heart of Europe for the past two weeks, those crimes are not being done and committed by the people of Russia.

Everybody is rightly focusing on the war of aggression, the actual war that Vladimir Putin has been leading against Ukraine. But there is another war that the Kremlin regime has conducted very swiftly and very successfully, and that has been the war of what remained of independent media in Russia, what made the Russian civil society. Literally, every single major independent source in Russia has been shut down and past few weeks.

Echo of Moscow radio station for years has been synonymous with quality independent journalism in Russia. We have people already -- dozens of people who have been indicted under this new clause, this new so-called defense of speaking out against the war. This includes today, for example, a Russian orthodox

priest in the region of Costa is being charged and fined for speaking out against killings, against the war in his sermon in church. Now that is outlawed in Vladimir Putin's Russia.

So the astonishing a mind-boggling fact, however incredulous it sounds, is that most people in Russia today do not even know that there is a war that Vladimir Putin's regime is conducting against Ukraine. If you watch Russian state television, you live in this imagined reality where it is the West and the Ukrainian government that are to blame for the conflict.

21:30:08]

And what Putin's military forces are doing are conducting a so-called targeted special operations that does not in any way affect civilians. But I think people have been watching your channel and other world media seen the horrific images coming out of Ukraine, they can be the judges of that for themselves.

VELSHI: And given the threat to opposition leaders like yourself, to journalists, to protesters, it's remarkable. Something you told me years ago that always sticks with me, don't talk about Russians, talk about the Russian administration, the Russian government the Putin regime because Russians are not onside with this thing.

But you advocate something interesting. You advocate for Western countries, democratic nations to produce more Russian language journalism that shows what's actually happening in Ukraine, to burst the Russian state media's fake news bubble. But how does that actually happen? How do Western outlets actually get that kind of reporting to the Russian people now that the Russian government has blocked out or shut out all the proposing press?

KARA-MURZA: Look, if this was done in the Soviet times, when those Western radio broadcasters, Radio Liberty, the BBC Russian service, Deutsche Berlin and so on, beamed the radio signal through the Iron Curtain, to reach millions of listeners, and side of the Soviet Union.

And Soviet dissidents and Western analysts alike emphasize just how important is the truth, and the voice of objective information is. We are delegitimizing the totalitarian regime, in the eyes of its own people and eventually leading to the collapse of the communist system, at the end of the Cold War.

You know, I think by now, better late than never, as they say. Hopefully, it is clear, to the free world, to Western democracies, that the only way to resolve the situation that has been led to us to a major land war in the middle of Europe is to make sure that Vladimir Putin is not in power. You know, for years, the Russian opposition has been warning western democracies just wear this appeasement of Putin will lead to.

And for all of those years, unfortunately, Western leaders chose to look the other way. Western countries and Western financial systems, and Western banks, continue to, essentially, enable and bankroll the kleptocracy. And this is where it red led. I wish we had been wrong on this.

But now, at least now, it should be clear to the civilized world, that the only solution to this is for a political changes in Russia. Now, needless to say, political change in Russia, can and should only be accomplished by Russian citizens. No way advocates for regime change from outside, or any other nonsense of the Kremlin propaganda would have you believe.

But, I think it is important that the free world helps the Russian people to get access to the truth about the horrific crimes that the Putin regime is committing supposedly on their behalf. It is important that the Putin kleptocracy and the Putin oligarchy is finally and fully cut out from the global financial system. We are seeing this. There is more that needs to be done.

There is also to send a very clear message that the Western world, and the United States in particular sees Vladimir Putin exactly for who he is, not a legitimate president, not democratically elected leader, because, of course, he isn't, but as an unlawful, illegitimate usurper.

There is a very important congressional initiative here in the United States. It's called the House Resolution 806 that was introduced on the bipartisan level a few weeks ago, as it calls for derecognition, official derecognition of Vladimir Putin's regime by the United States, in the same way that Maduro's regime in Venezuela and Lukashenko's regime in Belarus among others are not recognized.

I hope they see this initiative passed (INAUDIBLE), all the more added urgency now as Vladimir Putin is conducting war crimes, and crimes against humanity at the heart of Europe.

VELSHI: Vladimir, thanks as always for your time, and your analysis, and for your hard work. Russian opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza, we appreciate it.

It is just passed 3:30 a.m. here in Zahony, Hungary, on the Ukrainian border.

Coming up next, I will go inside the train station, where I have been reporting from --so you can see a better look at how the millions of Ukrainian refugees are managing.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:39:07]

VELSHI: It's 3:38 in the morning right now. At 4:05, this train is going to leave for Budapest. This is Zahony, Hungary, just across the border from Ukraine, where thousands of people, fleeing for their lives. Right now, I am outside of the train station, at the temporary resting space for these refugees before the next leg of their journey that they're about to embark on.

Just before the last train left for Budapest, I went inside to get a look at what's like. Let me show you around.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

VELSHI: All right. This is the train station in Zahony, Hungary. It's across -- across the border, across the river from Chop, which is in Ukraine.

Let me show you how this goes. People are waiting here. It's really, really crowded right now because there's a train that is about to leave for here, to Budapest. That is where most people are going. They had points beyond that, but right now, this is what it is.

People stay here in this train station, until the train comes.

[21:40:01]

It's warm. There's food as you saw. Take a look, there is a mother-child room. As you know, half of the refugees coming out of Ukraine are children. They are all over the place, kids all over the place, little children.

So, there is a nursery for them. It is a little more quiet than being out here in the middle of the train station. You can see, everybody here waiting for these trains to come in. A train has just pulled in, right over, that's the train that is going take them back to Budapest, going to take them to Budapest.

Now, there is another situation going on right here, and that is the parents who have taken their kids to this point and are going to leave them in Hungary, they'll go to Budapest and they'll meet up with families somewhere else, and the other European city, and somewhere else, but parents who are going back into Ukraine.

By the way, as they come in, they have to get off at a border crossing, it is not far from here, and wait for several hours that will bring them across the border.

And now, you can see, as a train is pulled in, people are very anxious to get on the train. It's not even ready for boarding, and it's about 18 degrees outside right now. You can see, people are just very, very ready, to go to their next destination, to get a little bit of food, to get a little bit of warmth, and to get some shelter, and begin the rest of their lives. That is the situation here at the train station at Zahony train station, over the border from Ukraine.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VELSHI: Now, already, more than 2.3 million people have been forced to flee Ukraine. More than 214,000 of those Ukrainians, about 10 to 12 percent on a daily basis are coming here to Hungary, either for safety, or onward travel. Hungary, along with the rest of the E.U., is welcoming these refugees. They bloc is allowing Ukrainian refugees to seek something called temporary protective status, for at least a year.

But many Ukrainians, who fled the country, maintain hope that they don't have to be somewhere else for a year, or longer. They want to go back to their homes, in Ukraine. I'm going to introduce you to one of them after the break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:46:16]

VELSHI: It is bitterly cold here in Zahony, Hungary. For the nearly 215,000 evacuees who fled Ukraine, some of whom are waiting at this train station, the real feel is 18 degrees Fahrenheit right now.

Earlier, I spoke with a young woman named Marta. She's from a city of Rivne in western Ukraine. Martha was escorted this far by her mother who will be heading back into Ukraine while she travels onward.

Listen to our conversation.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

VELSHI: And tell me about your journey here.

MARTA BARASHYVETS, RESIDENT OF RIVNE, UKRAINE: Now I am going to Budapest, later to Spain, but I don't want to leave my country, my home. But my parents decided to take us to Spain. After we woke up at 6:00 a.m. from explosion of our airports in my city, and after sirens sounding in my city.

VELSHI: The sirens to say that there were bombs or attacks.

BARASHYVETS: Yes.

VELSHI: Did you hear them?

BARASHYVETS: Yeah, the second day of the war. In my city, especially by our airport near my house.

VELSHI: How did you get out? How did you leave from your home?

BARASHYVETS: My parents, my parents said to me, we must leave and you know.

VELSHI: Who have you traveled with?

BARASHYVETS: I've traveled with my mother but -- but she can't stay with us in Spain because she must continue her job in Kyiv and look after for her parents in Ukraine, and we will stay in Spain with my sister-in-law with family friends.

VELSHI: So your mother is going to go back now.

BARASHYVETS: Yeah, because -- because she has parents and Ukraine and her -- and my father to stay in Ukraine.

VELSHI: Does that scare you?

BARASHYVETS: Yes. Very. It's very sad because I am really scared and worried about my parents, about my country, and I can't understand why I must leave my home and my country.

VELSHI: Tell me about your father, he stayed behind?

BARASHYVETS: My father, yes, stayed in Ukraine, and then we -- because I love him so much and it's sad. I don't understand why I must leave my country, my home. It's terrible.

VELSHI: I'm so sorry that you have to leave. Thank you for talking to us. I appreciated, and I hope your journey is safe, and I hope you get to go home.

BARASHYVETS: I will be back in Ukraine and we will liberate our country. And I hope as soon as I can I will be back in Ukraine, yeah.

VELSHI: You will be back. Thank you.

BARASHYVETS: You're welcome.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VELSHI: After I finished recording she said to me, how does this happen in 2022? And then she said to me, humanity is in crisis.

Stories like Marta, a fear and transition, and insecurity and hope are everywhere in this transition.

Coming up next, we will talk to a journalist who herself left Ukraine because of Russia's invasion, and who's currently on the Polish border and has been spending her days there documenting the lives of other Ukrainians that immigrants, young and old, who until now have called Ukraine home. Their stories are next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[21:54:50]

VELSHI: Throughout this crisis, the world has turned to journalists who live in Ukraine to get a firsthand perspective of what is happening. One of these journalists is named Aliam Kent. Aliam Kent was among the many people in Ukraine forced to flee the country for the refugee camps in neighboring Poland.

[21:55:06]

Since arriving in Poland, Alem Kent and her reporting partner, Romana Isabella, have been documenting the experiences of Ukrainian refugees for a video project called "Diaries in Exile". Their works put a human face on the victims of this war capturing not just their trials and hardship, but also moments of laughter and levity experience by real people keeping hope alive every day.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(MUSIC)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: How did you get a piano here?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's mine. I used to show this piano everywhere I go.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Wow. How do you travel with this?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Did you see a tent (ph) over there?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Uh-huh.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That's a piano home.

(MUSIC)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: Joining us now is Alem Kent, Ukraine-based journalist and producer of "Diaries in Exile".

Alem, thank you for being with us.

You are seeing things, I'm trying to capture you are doing it much better than I am, but you are capturing the humanity of these refugees. You are taking them away from being an obstruction, because when people here, you know, a million and a half refugees, or two million refugees, it's hard to understand that each one of these are individual lives lived.

ALEM KENT, JOURNALIST: Yes, thank you. That's exactly what we are trying to do with the series.

VELSHI: I want to ask you about some of the lighter moments. There aren't light moments in refugee sites. But one of the things we did, it was an interview with a 17-year-old boy from Odesa, and your reaction. I just want to play that for our audience.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Many don't understand the situation but it's pretty clear. That it's the fault of politics, the people aren't at fault.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Who lost their babushka, attention. Who lost their babushka. A babushka is here.

(LAUGHTER)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VELSHI: I'm in a train station, so I'm getting cuts and announcements like you can hear now about the next train coming. But you got an announcement of who lost their babushka.

There is some strength in the human spirit in which people laugh, they tell jokes. They are trying to grab some little piece of life to continue on, even in this horrible situation.

KENT: Yes, 100 percent. While Romana and I are running around trying to capture these human moments we find pain that we share alongside with these people and we find humor. I'd say that's how this war is also being perceived. I mean, my friends and I are reading the news constantly but we're also sending memes to each other, it's a very Ukrainian way, I say, of coping and being able to live through this process.

VELSHI: Every last person I talked to ends when they talk to me in an interview with the expression, glory to Ukraine. They all talk about the fact that they are going home, not that they hope they're going home.

What is it about the Ukrainian spirit that is allowing the people to stay back and fight and everybody who leaves to say, we're going back?

KENT: I think that's just too Ukrainians are at their core. The rest of the world is really meeting the people for the first time, for many. And that is one of the regular themes, I would say from all the people we have spoken to. They have indeed said that they are planning on returning home.

When asking what's next, it's a very scary question. Many people are lost, they don't know what is going to happen next. But the one thing they have in mind is going back and rebuilding their country on their own. And that really tells their spirits and the belief that the people have in themselves and their country, and as why people have been lost hope.

VELSHI: Tell me what you want Western audiences to understand. It becomes very hard when we report, as I said, on these mass numbers and these people who are going out. When you want people to understand about Ukrainians for the work that you are doing?

KENT: I want people to understand that Ukrainians are just like anybody else, but they are their own very unique individual people. They are different from Russians, even though they are Russians speaking Ukrainians. They are different from the people in the countries that the border, which are EU countries, and they are trying to progress towards the society.

So it's a constantly changing culture, constantly changing country, and they are being attacked for their beliefs of freedom and democracy. So, that's really who they are as people I would say. That's why you see how they are reacting now.

So I hope that people are inspired meeting these people and continue to support.

VELSHI: Alem Kent is a journalist and producer of "Diaries in Exile", which you can find on YouTube starting today. Alem, thank you for your time tonight and for this project.

That does it for tonight. We'll see you again tomorrow.

It's time now for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O'DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence. My apologies, I've eaten into your time a little bit. It is -- it is so hard when hearing these stories to stop.

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