



International Council in Support of Ukraine
Conseil International de Soutien de l'Ukraine
Рада Українських Державницьких Організацій Світу

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ICSU PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF
BLACK RIBBON DAY REMEMBRANCE AND UKRAINIAN INDEPENDENCE**

TORONTO – On August 23, 2015, Yuri Shymko, President of the International Council in Support of Ukraine, addressed the participants of the Black Ribbon Day Remembrance held in Toronto at the Masaryktown Park, in conjunction with commemorations in five other cities in Canada.

Background: In November 2009, Canada's Parliament unanimously passed a resolution to establish an annual Canadian Day of Remembrance for the victims of Nazi and Soviet Communist crimes on August 23, called "Black Ribbon Day", which coincides with the anniversary of the signing of the infamous pact between the Nazi and Soviet Communist regimes.

Full text of Remarks:

Mr. Markus Hess-President of the Central and East European Council, distinguished members of diplomatic missions, federal, provincial and municipal governments; representatives of the CEEC constituent communities; Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honoured to participate at this year's Black Ribbon Day of Remembrance for the victims of Nazi and Soviet Communist crimes. I am particularly privileged to bring greetings in my capacity as the President of the International Council in Support of Ukraine, whose first two presidents were inmates of the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen. As I look at so many close colleagues present here today such as Joana Kuras, Laas Leivat, Markus Hess, Chris Korwyn-Kuczynski and others I am reminded of that long road we travelled together many years ago in Canada to break the chains of Communist tyranny and bring liberty to our respective peoples.

Over three decades ago we were waging a common determined struggle against the then Soviet Union as we prepared a Joint Resolution to the United Nations from the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian World Congresses entitled "The Decolonization of the USSR."

As a Member of Parliament I was privileged to present that Document on November 23, 1978 to the President of the UN General Assembly and all UN members with the assistance of our Canadian UN Mission and the unanimous support of all the parties in the House of Commons. Who would have predicted that 13 years later the USSR would cease to exist, the former Soviet Republics and Soviet Satellites would become independent states and members of the EU and NATO, with the exception of Ukraine and Belarus?

Who would have predicted that, after a short span of 23 years of state independence, a relatively unknown former KGB officer named Vladimir Putin would hijack Russia's fledgling democracy and unleash a bloody war in the middle of Europe with the intent of renewing the very same USSR we had fought to eliminate?

With the military occupation and annexation of 10% of Ukraine's territory after staging local elections under the point of a gun, we were witnessing a familiar scenario reminiscent of Stalin's 1940 annexation of the Baltic States and Hitler's 1939 dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

On the 70th anniversary of the end of WW II a war is raging again in Europe as it faces a renewed aggression by a Russian semi-police regime whose ideology of xenophobia and ethnocentric chauvinism has transformed 80% of its population into ideologically blinded citizens bound by a straightjacket of imperial entitlement, no different from those under Nazi Germany.

At a meeting this year with representatives of Moscow's Jewish community, Putin even had the audacity to mention his admiration for Hitler's Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels because he managed to transform an entire nation into his vision of Germany. Putin's vision of a new Russian World or "Ruskiy Mir" has redrawn a European border by force, violating ten international treaties. To date Putin's seizure of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine has resulted in the death of more than 6,000, with over 20,000 wounded and one and a half million refugees.

There could have been more victims were it not for the galvanizing spirit of unity of the Ukrainian people, the sheer determination to defend their homeland and the bravery of their soldiers and volunteer battalions.

Recent Russian military exercises have targeted the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as Finland and Sweden. Similar exercises and war games in 2009 even had a scenario of defending a Baltic invasion of Belarus and a war with NATO culminating with a nuclear attack on Warsaw.

The second February 2015 Minsk ceasefire negotiations are, in my opinion, doomed to fail just like the first negotiations of September 2014 because they are not held under the Geneva format and are undermined by the absence of serious military partners such as the UK and the US who had guaranteed Ukraine's territorial security under the Budapest Accords when Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons.

The ceasefire in the Donbas region is on the verge of a collapse any day due to the escalating violations by Russian troops and their separatist allies who continue to receive heavy military hardware from Russia while the OSCE is prevented from carrying out its monitoring mission in the occupied zone. Recently four OSCE vehicles were burned down in Donetsk and the Head of the OSCE Mission was even considering pulling out of Eastern Ukraine's war zone. Ironically, a disproportional number of OSCE monitors are actually Russian military personnel.

President Obama still refers to the crisis in Ukraine as merely a regional problem and refuses to accept the bipartisan recommendation of the US Congress to supply Ukraine with anti-tank and anti-aircraft lethal defensive weapons. The White House still does not consider Russia as posing an existentialist threat to its national security but rather views it as an expedient ally to help negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran.

While Russia continues to undermine Ukraine, to divide NATO and to destabilize the EU, the West is now mistakenly giving greater priority to combating ISIS, thus relegating Russia's war in Ukraine and the long term threat to Europe to secondary importance.

The Russian FSB had infiltrated the Jihadist Islamists since 1995 when it allowed the Egyptian Terrorist Dr. al Zawahiri to leave Russia and join Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to form Al-Qaeda. Putin's henchman of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, praised the January 2015 ISIS terrorist attack in Paris that murdered 4 members of the Jewish community in a kosher supermarket and 12 journalists of Charlie Hebdo. Nevertheless Putin continues to protect Kadyrov, having honored him with numerous medals of achievement.

Yet Russia is posing at the same time as a peace maker. The White House is even considering Putin's offer to have Russia join a coalition with the US to combat ISIS in order to save Syrian President Bashir al Assad, whom Russia has supplied with a vast array of deadly weapons used to murder over 300,000 Syrian civilians and cause the exodus of over 4 million refugees. Putin's own murderous record would require a separate address to list in detail, starting with his order to blow up 3 apartment buildings in Moscow by the FSB on the pretext that it was the work of Chechen separatists. This led to his genocide of Chechnya with the extermination of the entire civilian population of Grozny.

Putin has not hesitated to liquidate those Russians who dared to oppose or criticize him as shown by the assassinations of investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, FSB defector Alexander Litvinenko, businessman Boris Berezovsky and most recently opposition leader Boris Nemtsov. He is also directly responsible for the murder of 298 innocent civilians including 80 children on the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH 17 downed by a Russian surface to air missile he provided to arm the pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

There is more than enough incriminating evidence to have him brought before the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague to be tried like Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. But Europe is now more preoccupied with the Greek debt crisis, the British referendum on EU membership and the wave of refugees invading its shores. Russia, on the other hand, continues to finance and support a wide array of anti-EU and anti-NATO far-right and far-left political parties in France, Austria, Hungary and Greece.

It continues to spread lies and sophisticated disinformation through such agencies as Russia Today filtering it into mainstream media in many countries including Canada. Despite the non-lethal assistance and restrictive sanctions on Russia, Ukraine has been left to rely on its own military resources to defend its territory. The current Peace Talks in Minsk are viewed by many Ukrainians as merely offering a temporary suspension of a pending invasion. Time is on its side only because this will allow Ukraine to strengthen its armed forces, hold a referendum to join NATO and seek funds to prevent a financial catastrophe.

Otherwise Russia's continued aggression may well escalate. It will be stopped only by the number of returning body bags with Russian soldiers, mass anti-war demonstrations in Moscow and a continued decline of the Russian economy due to lowering oil prices. The development of future events in Ukraine is unpredictable just as the behaviour of a psychopathic leader like Vladimir Putin remains unpredictable. But I nevertheless believe that truth and justice will prevail with victory on the side of the victims of aggression not the aggressor. Putin's dream of a Russian World will eventually end up in the garbage heap of history like that of his political mentor, Goebbels, and his Third Reich.

We are holding this Day of Remembrance on the eve of the celebration tomorrow in Kyiv of the 24th Anniversary of the Declaration of Ukraine's Independence. Ukrainians all over the world express their gratitude for the support that each one of you, your communities in Canada and the compatriots in your homelands have provided to the people of Ukraine in solidarity with their struggle for liberty, justice and peace. I thank you on behalf of my compatriots in Canada and Ukraine.

Here in Canada we are also in the midst of a Federal Election. We are indeed fortunate to live in a country governed by the force of law not the law of force. Jointly we represent a formidable electoral force of 4 million Canadians.

The Canadian government, whatever political party in power, has always played a leading role in defending the human rights and supporting the aspirations for national liberties by the people of Central and Eastern Europe, be it Hungary's Freedom Fighters in 1956, Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring in 1968, Poland's Solidarity in the 1980s, or Ukraine's State Independence in 1991.

Mr. President, I understand that the CEEC under your leadership has set a series of specific demands to all the political parties competing in this election such as increasing lethal and non-lethal assistance to Ukraine. I can assure you that Vladimir Putin will be closely watching this election.

The Canadian government has taken a firm stand in defence of Ukraine's territorial unity, strongly condemning Russian aggression and issuing the most extensive set of sanctions of any Western country. We should make a joint effort of assuring that the party forming the next government will not diminish the extent of that support, that it will maintain the same level of commitment to Ukraine and will adopt all the CEEC demands.

God bless you all. God bless the communities and people of Central and Eastern Europe. God bless Canada.

