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# THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

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## Mariupol maternity hospital destroyed by Russian air strike, triggering global horror, outrage



Marian Kushnir, RadioSvoboda.org via RFE/RL

An elderly woman is helped into a van that was assigned to evacuate civilians from Bucha in the Kyiv region of Ukraine on March 9.

RFE/RL

A Russian air strike has devastated a maternity hospital in the beleaguered port city of Mariupol and wounded at least 17 people, Ukrainian officials said, triggering international condemnation from Washington, London and the Vatican, among others.

The hospital bombing came as humanitarian corridors set up to let civilians flee several besieged cities around Ukraine failed to materialize on the scale expected

because of continued Russian shelling, leaving hundreds of thousands trapped without basic supplies because of Moscow's unprovoked and premeditated invasion of Ukraine.

Mariupol's City Council said a Russian attack on the hospital on March 9 caused "colossal" damage, while President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on Twitter that there were "people, children under the

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## Russia's invasion sputters amid heroic Ukrainian resistance

Sanctions pummel Russian economy as Moscow's bombardments kill Ukrainian civilians



Ukraine Weapons Tracker

Damaged Russian T-80U tanks sit near Sumy along the same road where three more destroyed tanks have been seen in the city located northeast of Kyiv.

by Mark Raczkiewicz

(Editor's note: The following article was written in a fluid situation and contains information that was current as of 6 p.m. Kyiv time on March 9.)

WARSAW – Russia has resorted to wholesale bombing and shelling of civilian areas – including a maternity ward – as Moscow's invading forces face heroic resistance from a battle-hardened Ukrainian army and grass-roots territorial defense forces.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's plans to conquer the country in blitzkrieg fashion

began on February 24. The renewed invasion of Ukraine has led to mounting sanctions and heavy casualties for his economy and military.

Called a "dictator" by U.S. President Joe Biden, and a "terrorist" by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the long-time Kremlin leader's actions are being called war crimes.

In light of losing the tactical advantage of launching what appeared to be a multi-pronged attack with overwhelming forces, which included using neighboring Belarus as a springboard for the offensive, Russia

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## Ukraine and Russia hold more talks with goal of implementing ceasefire

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV – As Russia's unprovoked and premeditated war against Ukraine stretches into its third week, Russian and Ukrainian officials met to discuss the terms of a possible ceasefire and the establishment of humanitarian corridors that would be used to safely move refugees from areas hardest hit by the violence.

Russian forces have been slowed in their advance on various Ukrainian cities and they have instead focused on indiscriminate shelling civilian, non-military locations, including hospitals, residential apartment complexes, homes and even the very humanitarian corridors that were previously established to ferry civilians out of danger.

Despite being severely outgunned and outmanned, Ukrainians are nonetheless



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey

Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba as seen during talks with Russia's Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov in Turkey on March 10.

full of hope. The country's army has put up a spirited, heroic defense that has in several instances successfully pushed back Russian troops.

As thousands of ordinary citizens in temporarily occupied towns protest Moscow's war against Ukraine, the international community has stepped up economic sanctions on Russia.

Ukrainians have little hope in a diplomatic solution, but officials representing the Ukrainian government met with their Russian counterparts to seek a peaceful end to the war.

On March 9, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy once again declared his readiness to sit down at the negotiating table with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Mr. Zelenskyy said he believes that

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Ukrainian war unsettles Russian regions and non-Russian republics

by Paul Goble  
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Moscow has been extremely wary about reporting combat losses in Russian President Vladimir Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine, electing instead to make the heads of the federal subjects responsible for doing so at the local level – lest it become immediately obvious to all Russians just how large these cumulative losses have become. But that decision, like the decision to make the federal subject heads responsible for fighting the coronavirus pandemic, may backfire on the central government. Not only is this forced delegation of responsibility likely to infuriate those governors, who will have to face public anger, but it may also highlight the extent to which “Russian” combat losses are concentrated in non-Russian areas and among rural Russians. Indeed, there is already growing evidence that non-Russian troops are dying in disproportionate numbers in Ukraine. So, while most republic leaders have lined up behind Putin's war, many in the national movements are now talking about pursuing secession from the Russian Federation.

Moscow has not publicly announced that it is requiring the heads of Russia's federal subjects to announce deaths, but most observers say that this policy is clearly already in place. The Club of the Regions portal has documented such gubernatorial actions in 13 regions so far, divided almost equally between non-Russian republics and predominantly rural Russian oblasts and

krais (Club-rf.ru, March 1). And close observers say this would not be happening without the approval and, even more importantly, the direct order of the Kremlin (Club-rf.ru, March 3). According to most of these analysts, Moscow undoubtedly took this step because it is well aware of how sensitive many Russians are to such losses and also because the center knows that no one expects the governors to have information about nationwide casualty totals. The regional heads know only about losses in their own areas and cannot say more than that. That may help Moscow conceal the true overall numbers of Russian troops killed in action; but it also is likely to lead to competing casualty tabulations, further undermining public trust in the center. The same issues came up after the governors were given primary responsibility for combatting the coronavirus pandemic (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, April 2, 2020).

But this approach is having yet another potentially explosive effect: non-Russian troops and soldiers from distant rural regions of the Russian Federation are dying in Ukraine in numbers higher than their share in the population suggests they should be. That is likely the result of the higher share they form among those in uniform rather than a concerted effort to use them instead of Russians from urban areas as cannon fodder (see EDM, March 1). Still, many in predominantly ethnic-Russian rural regions and in non-Russian republics are certain to believe otherwise, concluding

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## Putin losing the wars he started

by Pavel K. Baev  
Eurasia Daily Monitor

The word “war” is presently banned in the official Russian discourse on Ukraine, but in fact the “special military operation,” launched on President Vladimir Putin's order in the early morning hours of February 24, includes several wars fought in different domains. The massive re-invasion of Ukraine constitutes clearly the most kinetic aspect; however, at the highest level, Putin imagines he is engaging in a multi-dimensional set of contestations with the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union to reshape the European and even global security order (RussianCouncil.ru, March 2). This inflamed ambition has overruled all remotely realistic assessments of Russia's own strength or the enemy's weaknesses, so that none of these fast-moving wars are going well for the Kremlin.

The diplomatic offensive has registered the most crushing defeat at the United Nations General Assembly, where members approved the resolution condemning the Russian aggression, with only five votes against (Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Syria and Eritrea), while China showed its disapproval by abstaining (Izvestiya, March 2). Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov sought to explain away this fiasco by accusing the U.S. of resorting to blackmail. But it is rather difficult to believe that states like India, Iran or South Africa (notable among 35 abstentions) could succumb to blackmailing (RIA Novosti, March 3).

Russia has stuck to its strategy of forcefully pressing its clearly unacceptable security demands. Yet that unyielding diplomatic assault has been premised on the belief that Western unity cannot withstand the threat of war with pronounced nuclear overtones (Ezhednevny Zhurnal, February 28). The nuclear risks, indeed, climbed higher with the Russian attack on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant last Friday (March 4), which Moscow tried to present as Ukrainian sabotage (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, March 4). But during the extraordinary meetings of NATO foreign affairs ministers and the EU Foreign Affairs Council, the Euro-Atlantic community did not buckle, strongly condemning Russia's reckless operations. Thus, Mr. Lavrov's expressed hopes that “our Western partners” would soon overcome their “hysteria” find no supporting evidence (TASS, March 3).

Instead of plunging the West into disarray, Russian aggression has produced a powerful unifying momentum, consolidated by U.S. leadership and augmented by remarkable shifts in the security policies of many European states, first of all Germany (Rosbalt, March 3). The EU has found resolve to unleash total economic war against its main supplier of natural gas, and Russia is taking far heavier losses than it had budgeted. The government previously performed some stress tests in anticipation of interruptions in the SWIFT system of financial transactions, but Moscow was clearly not remotely ready for the massive

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## NEWSBRIEFS

### Harris arrives in Warsaw

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris has arrived in Warsaw at the start of a two-day visit to Poland and Romania to discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the impact the war is having on the region. Ms. Harris arrived in the Polish capital on March 9 amid unexpected diplomatic turbulence over fighter jets. The Polish government on March 8 came out with a plan to transfer its Russian-made fighter planes to a U.S. military base in Germany, with the expectation that the planes would then be handed over to Ukrainian pilots trying to fend off Russian forces. In turn, the United States would supply Poland with U.S.-made jets with “corresponding capabilities.” But the Poles didn't run that idea past the Biden administration before going public with it, and the Pentagon quickly dismissed the idea as not tenable. Warplanes flying from a U.S. and NATO base into airspace contested with Russia would raise the risk of the war expanding beyond Ukraine. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki stressed on March 9 that Poland's support to Ukraine has been defensive and that any decision on whether to make the MiG-29 planes available to Ukraine would be up to the United States and NATO – and then only if all nations agreed. “Poland is not a side in this war,” he said, adding, “Such a serious decision like handing over planes must be unanimous and unequivocally taken by all of the North Atlantic Alliance.” Ms. Harris is expected to continue talks with the Poles about getting fighter jets to the Ukrainians during her visit to Warsaw, according to a senior administration official quoted by AP. On March 9, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Ms. Harris's trip was unrelated and the issue of planes would be “worked through military channels.” Ms. Harris is scheduled to meet on March 10 with Polish President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki as well as with Ukrainians who have fled to Poland. Ms. Harris will travel on March 11 to Bucharest, where she's to meet Romanian President Klaus Iohannis. The vice president is also expected to use the meetings in Poland and Romania to underscore the U.S. commitment to the NATO alliance and the need for continued

humanitarian and military assistance for Ukraine. (RFE/RL, with reporting by AP and Reuters)

### Russia admits using thermobaric weapons

Britain says the Russian Ministry of Defense has confirmed the use in Ukraine of the TOS-1A weapon system, which uses thermobaric rockets. “The Russian MoD has confirmed the use of the TOS-1A weapon system in Ukraine,” it said on Twitter. “The TOS-1A uses thermobaric rockets, creating incendiary and blast effects.” Thermobaric weapons, sometimes called “vacuum bombs,” basically suck in oxygen from the surrounding air to generate a more high-temperature explosion than conventional bombs. Though not illegal, their usage is controversial because they are much more devastating than conventional explosives of a similar size and have a devastating impact on anyone caught in their blast radius. The United States has used them in Vietnam and more recently in Afghanistan to destroy mountain caves where militants were hiding. Russia used them in its war in Chechnya in 1999 and was condemned by Human Rights Watch for doing so. Russian-made thermobaric weapons were also reportedly used in the Syrian civil war by the regime of Bashar al-Assad. (RFE/RL, with reporting by Reuters)

### Thousands arrested at anti-war protests

Russian authorities have arbitrarily arrested thousands of peaceful protesters at anti-war rallies across Russia, in line with their increasingly brutal crackdown on those who disagree with Russia's military offensive in Ukraine, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on March 9. The global rights watchdog accused Russian police of using “excessive force” against protesters while detaining them, and, in several cases, inflicting “abuse amounting to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment on those in custody.” According to OVD-Info, a leading human rights NGO in Russia, 13,500 people have been arbitrarily arrested since Moscow launched its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on February 24. “Russian authorities continue to deny peo-

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# Refugees fleeing eastern Ukraine endure harrowing train journey from Luhansk to Lviv

by Askold Krushelnicky

LYSYCHANSK, Ukraine – With the number of escape routes out of Ukraine severely limited and with bombs hitting various civilian locations, refugees fleeing the country have faced increasingly horrific and dangerous conditions as Russia's unprovoked and premeditated war moved into its third week.

Most of the refugees have heading westward with the city of Lviv still viewed as a safe haven on the way to European Union (EU) countries.

But 300 Belarusian tanks, according to Ukrainian military intelligence, wait on their side of Ukraine's border, 70 miles north of Lviv, to join Russia's onslaught.

The U.N. says that more than 1.2 million people have left Ukraine and the EU estimates that up to 4 million refugees may eventually flee the country.

On March 2, a convoy of U.N. vehicles from Kyiv set off for Uzhhorod in western Ukraine on the border with Slovakia. Anyone who wanted to leave the capital was allowed to follow the convoy in their own vehicles and at their own risk.

This reporter accompanied a trainload of evacuees from Lysychansk, Ukraine, an embattled area in the country's eastern Luhansk Oblast, on what turned out to be an exhausting three-day rail journey along a 696-mile route that, in normal times, takes around 24 hours.

Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk Oblast have been partly-occupied by Moscow's puppet "separatist" forces since the Kremlin first invaded Ukraine in 2014.

Earlier, Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin declared the pro-Moscow entities independent republics. In launching his full-scale war on Ukraine, he used the pretext of "liberating" Russian speakers in the region from what he called a "genocide" being committed by the Ukrainian government.

Hundreds of evacuees, mostly women and children, were stranded at Lysychansk Railway Station, near the main Ukrainian-held city of Severodonetsk, because Russian shelling destroyed a portion of the track between them and the train which was scheduled to pick them up at 4 p.m. on a recent Friday.

Tension mounted as the rail station staff repeatedly announced delays in the train's estimated time of arrival.



Courtesy of Askold Krushelnicky

Journalist Askold Krushelnicky (right) worked on his computer while children travelling to Lviv from eastern Ukraine looked on.

At about 10:30 p.m., refugees were still waiting for their train, and Russian forces began pounding Lysychansk with artillery bombardments. The sound of the blasts, amplified within the cavernous station, triggered screams from terrified children.

Some people threw themselves and their children to the hard faux-marble floor. Others rushed to hide in a 1960s-era small, dilapidated bomb shelter. To reach the shelter, which can only accommodate a fraction of those trying to enter, is reached by climbing a series of perilously steep, rickety wooden stairs.

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Askold Krushelnicky

Brothers Danylo (left), age 7, and Ivan, age 8, together with their mother, Maya, 38, fled their home in Lysychansk, Ukraine, for the relative safety of Lviv, in the west of the country.



Askold Krushelnicky

Vitaly, who gave only his first name, spent three years in the Ukrainian Army. He said he was travelling to Kyiv to help defend the capital.

## U.S. VP Harris accuses Russia of 'atrocities' in Ukraine, says there should be an investigation

RFE/RL

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris has accused Russia of committing "atrocities of unimaginable proportions" in Ukraine as she traveled to Warsaw amid controversy over a Polish plan to supply fighter jets to Ukraine.

Ms. Harris's trip, aimed at bolstering U.S. support for its Eastern European allies, has been overshadowed by an open disagreement between Warsaw and Washington over the Polish proposal, which called for sending MiG warplanes to Ukraine by way of a U.S. military base in Germany.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been asking the West for access to Soviet-era MiG-29 jets, some of which remained in former Warsaw Pact countries after they joined NATO.

Ukrainian Air Force pilots fly their own small fleet of those and other jets; receiving additional planes from places like Poland or Bulgaria – both NATO members – would add to Ukraine's defense against Russia's air forces.

But Washington rejected the Polish plan outright.

"We do not support the transfer of additional fighter aircraft to the Ukrainian Air Force at this time, and therefore have no desire to see them in our custody either," Defense Department spokesman John Kirby said on March 9.

Asked at a joint news conference in Warsaw on March 10 with President Andrzej Duda about the jet dispute, Ms. Harris dodged a reporter's question.

"We're making deliveries every day, in terms of what we can do, in terms of assistance and, in particular, when you look at what we've been doing, as it relates to anti-tank and anti-defense systems," she said, according to a White House transcript of the conversation.

Earlier, Ms. Harris responded to reports that Russia had attacked a maternity hospital in the southern port city of Mariupol. Ukrainian officials said at least three people, including a child, were killed in the March 9 attack.

"Absolutely, there should be an investigation and we should all be watching and I have no question that the eyes of the world are on this war and what Russia has done in terms of this aggression and these atrocities," Ms. Harris said.

"It is obvious to us that in Ukraine Russians are committing war crimes," said Mr. Duda, whose country has taken in more than 1 million Ukrainian refugees over the two weeks of fighting.

"There are pregnant women, there are children, if you kill ordinary people, you throw bombs, rockets at housing estates, this is barbarism bearing the features of genocide," he said.

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## FOR THE RECORD

### Vatican issues statement urging peace in Ukraine, says it has sent two cardinals to the region

The following statement was released by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, a dicastery of the Roman curia, on March 7.

The Holy See has put itself at the service of achieving peace in Ukraine. In an extraordinary gesture, Pope Francis announced at the Angelus in St. Peter's Square on March 6 that he has dispatched two cardinals as expressions of the Church's solidarity with the suffering Ukrainian people: Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the Almoner; and Cardinal Michael Czerny, the Prefect ad interim of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Cardinal Krajewski is on his way now [March 7] toward the Polish and Ukrainian border, where he will visit refugees and volunteers in shelters and homes.

Cardinal Czerny will arrive in Hungary on Tuesday [March 8] to visit some reception centers for the migrants coming from Ukraine.

Both are directed to Ukraine and depending on the situation they intend to reach the country in the coming days.

The cardinals will bring aid to the needy and serve as "the presence, not only of the Pope, but of all the Christian people who express solidarity with the people of Ukraine and say, 'War is madness! Stop, please! Look at this cruelty! Rivers of blood and tears are flowing in Ukraine. It is not merely a 'military operation,' but [it is] a war which sows death,

destruction and misery."

Pope Francis declared that, "The number of victims is increasing, as are the people fleeing, especially mothers and children. The need for humanitarian assistance in that troubled country is growing dramatically by the hour. I make a heartfelt appeal for humanitarian corridors to be genuinely secured, and for aid to be guaranteed and access facilitated to the besieged areas in order to offer vital relief to our brothers and sisters oppressed by bombs and fear. I thank all those who are taking in refugees. Above all, I implore that the armed attacks cease and that negotiation – and common sense – prevail, and that international law be respected once again!"

This latest action by Pope Francis is meant to also call attention to the many similar situations throughout the world. As the Holy Father said on the previous Sunday, "With a heart broken by what is happening in Ukraine, let us not forget the wars in other parts of the world, such as Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia. I repeat: put down your weapons! God is with the peacemakers, not with those who use violence." (Angelus, 27.02).

Cardinal Czerny will continue drawing the sad similarity between the Ukrainians'

(Continued on page 7)







## Ukrainian supporters rally in Washington to protest Russia's war on Ukraine, call on more U.S. support and aid for the besieged country

by Irena Sawchyn Doll

WASHINGTON – More than 1,000 people took part in a rally on March 6 in front of the White House to protest Russian President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked and premeditated war on Ukraine. The group also called for further action to support the people and government of the war-torn country.

The rally was the second to be organized in as many weeks by the Ukrainian Congressional Committee of America (UCCA) and the Ukrainian National Information Service (UNIS).

Former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine William B. Taylor, Jr., addressed participants of the rally. As did U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who said he supported several measures to help Ukraine.

Mr. Portman said the U.S. should encourage Ukraine's neighbors to transfer older fighter jets to Ukrainian pilots. The U.S., he said, would then replace the donated MiG planes.

On March 8, Poland said it was ready to hand over all of its MiG-29 jets to a U.S. air base in Germany. Ukraine's neighbor also urged other NATO members with the same type of Russian-made warplanes to do the same, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said. The announcement caught the U.S. off guard, as a U.S. official later said the announcement was a "surprise," according to an RFE/RL report.

The Poles did not inform the Biden administration prior to making the announcement. The Pentagon quickly dismissed the idea as untenable.

On March 9, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said that, any decision on getting the MiG-29 planes to Ukraine would be up to the United States and NATO. He stressed that the move would only be made if all of the nations involved agreed.

"Poland is not a side in this war," he said, adding, "Such a serious decision like handing over planes must be unanimous and unequivocally taken by all of the North Atlantic Alliance."

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris has arrived in Warsaw on March 9 to continue talks with the Poles about getting fighter jets to the Ukrainians during her visit to Warsaw, according to a senior administration official quoted by AP.

Meanwhile, at the rally in Washington, Mr. Portman also issued calls for the U.S. to stop buying Russian oil and to cut off all Russian banks from the international bank-



More than 1,000 people took part in a rally on March 6 in front of the White House to protest Russia's unprovoked and premeditated war on Ukraine.

ing system. The senator said he hoped to see Russian commanders refuse to kill their innocent neighbors, and he wanted to see the U.S. move from freezing Russian assets to seizing them.

Two days after Mr. Portman's remarks, U.S. President Joe Biden announced on March 8 that the U.S. would ban imports of Russian oil.

"Today I am announcing the United States is targeting the main artery of Russia's economy. We're banning all imports of Russian oil and gas and energy," Mr. Biden said at the White House. "That means Russian oil will no longer be acceptable at U.S. ports and the American people will deal another powerful blow to Putin's war machine."

"This is a step we're taking to inflict further pain on Putin," Mr. Biden said.

Kurt Volker, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO, also addressed rally participants, saying that the United States was failing in its moral obligations to Ukraine.

"Eventually we will have to confront

Putin," he said, adding that "we should do this now."

Mr. Volker was among individuals who have recently called for the implementation of a no-fly zone in Ukraine. He said it is possible to create a no-fly zone while minimizing the risk of escalating the conflict with Russia by limiting the zone's geographical scope and agreeing not to initiate attacks.

The former ambassador also demanded the immediate implementation of safe zones for humanitarian aid into Ukraine and for the safe evacuation of refugees out of the country.

Mr. Volker emphasized that nuclear arms cannot be used as a threat, as doing so would allow other countries with nuclear weapons to do as they please.

The Estonian Ambassador to the United States Kristjan Prikk noted that his country has provided Ukraine with an extraordinary level support. That support has included Javelins, air defense equipment and medical supplies.



Roma Hadzewycz

Former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine William B. Taylor, Jr., addressed participants of a rally in support of Ukraine in front of the White House on March 6.

Radovan Javorcik, the ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the United States, pledged more military aid for Ukraine.

"Your freedom is my freedom," Mr. Javorcik said during the rally in Washington.

Deputy Chief of the Latvian Embassy in the U.S. Juris Pekalis was given a rousing round of applause when he noted that Latvia supports Ukraine's desire to achieve candidate status in the European Union.

The warmest welcome went to Adam Krzywosadzki, the deputy chief of mission at the Polish Embassy in the United States. Addressing the participants of the rally in Washington, Mr. Krzywosadzki spoke of the military, humanitarian and political aid that Poland has pledged for Ukraine.

Many rally participants and members of UCCA branches from nearby states came to the rally in Washington by bus. One such bus from Whippany, N.J., was funded by Selfreliance FCU of Whippany, N.J.

## Several thousand Ukrainians demonstrate in Times Square demanding more assistance for Ukraine



Roma Hadzewycz

NEW YORK – Several thousand Ukrainians from the Metropolitan New York area and beyond, joined by supporters of various ethnic backgrounds, converged on New York's famed Times Square on Saturday afternoon, March 5, to demonstrate their support for embattled Ukraine and to call on the U.S. government and NATO to do more to assist Ukraine in its defense against Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on the country. The photo above shows but a portion of the crowd, which chanted such slogans as "No-fly zone," "We stand with Ukraine" and "Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes," and sang the Ukrainian national anthem. Seen among the crowd were placards written in English, Ukrainian, Polish and Russian. In addition, a caravan of vehicles drove by several times with Ukrainian flags and banners calling for increased support for Ukraine and for the American public to stand with Ukraine.



Kurt Volker, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO, who addressed rally participants saying that the United States was failing in its moral obligations to Ukraine, also spoke with media during the rally.



## THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

# War crimes and justice

More than two weeks into an unprovoked, premeditated war unleashed by Russian President Vladimir Putin against the people of Ukraine, several things have now become abundantly clear. First, this is not a war waged only against the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The evidence makes it abundantly clear that Putin and the Russian military have targeted civilians, including those in apartment buildings, hospitals, humanitarian evacuation corridors, and, yes, his military has even bombed a maternity ward in Mariupol, Ukraine. Ukrainian officials have said that at least three people were killed in that attack, among them one child.

We also know that Putin has grown increasingly frustrated that his plan to quickly overtake various Ukrainian cities has encountered stiff resistance. The concern, of course, is that Putin will double-down on his full-scale invasion of Ukraine and unleash even more bloodshed and suffering on the Ukrainian people. The signs are clear that he has already taken this step, though there is growing concern the worst is yet to come.

During a trip to Warsaw, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris accused Russia of committing "atrocities of unimaginable proportions" in Ukraine. She was asked by reporters during her trip about the March 9 attack on the maternity hospital.

Speaking during a joint news conference in Warsaw on March 10 with Polish President Andrzej Duda, Ms. Harris responded to a question on the issue of Russian war crimes being committed in Ukraine.

"Absolutely," Ms. Harris said. "There should be an investigation and we should all be watching and I have no question that the eyes of the world are on this war and what Russia has done in terms of this aggression and these atrocities."

Mr. Duda also addressed the question. His answer was correctly unequivocal.

"It is obvious to us that in Ukraine Russians are committing war crimes," Mr. Duda said. "There are pregnant women, there are children. If you kill ordinary people, you throw bombs, rockets at housing estates. This is barbarism bearing the features of genocide," he said.

Speaking on CNN with Jake Tapper, David Scheffer, the former U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, was asked about the issue. Mr. Tapper asked whether indicting Putin in the International Criminal Court (ICC) would have any impact on Putin as Russia is not a member of the ICC.

"The answer is it doesn't matter," Mr. Scheffer said. "The International Criminal Court has full jurisdiction over Ukraine in this matter for the investigation. ... When he is indicted, and when the generals are indicted, the sanctions that have been imposed upon Russia – the most severe in history – will not be lifted until two things happen: one, the Russian military withdraws from Ukraine and Ukraine restores its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and, two, Putin and the indicted generals – the indicted fugitives from justice – are surrendered to The Hague. It would be implausible for the sanctions to be lifted until that happens. ... Those sanctions will stay in place until they [Putin and his generals] are surrendered."

While we are deeply concerned that Putin will continue to indiscriminately unleash hell on Ukraine, we look forward to the day when he and his generals will face justice for the growing number of crimes he has committed against the Ukrainian people. As the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

March  
18  
1939

## Turning the pages back...

Eighty-three years ago, on March 18, 1939, The Ukrainian Weekly's editorial in that issue lauded the heroic stand of Ukrainians who were fighting against an invading Hungarian army in the lead-up to World War II. Ukrainians, the editorial noted, declared independence after Hungary's ultimatum demanded Ukraine's immediate surrender.

"Betrayed by their erstwhile supposed ally, Germany, badly armed, and with little if any real military training, the Carpatho-Ukrainians are nevertheless fearlessly battling the Hungarian regular troops in the snow-covered valleys and mountains of their country, in some cases recapturing lost villages and inflicting heavy damage and casualties upon the enemy," the editorial continued.

Ukraine's independence movement, it added, is solely Ukrainian in origin and character. In light of Nazi Germany's invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia that began on March 15, Ukraine's stand against Hungary offered a contrast of outcomes.

"Truly, from this sordid destruction of Czechoslovakia, the Ukrainians are the only ones to emerge with honor and glory," the editorial wrote.

Adolph Hitler's goal of occupying Czechoslovakia was known in 1938, and the signing of the Munich Pact between Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain, made it possible. Ukraine issued an appeal to the four signatory countries to intercede against Hungary on Ukraine's behalf.

A bulletin report from the fighting stated: "Trains and trucks were rushing more Hungarian troops into Carpatho-Ukraine as the resistance of the Ukrainians showed no signs of relaxing. Artillery and machine guns were used to stem the Hungarian advance. Bridges were also wrecked for the same purpose. Among the thousands of refugees pouring into Romania from the war-torn region were many women who said their husbands had remained behind to fight the Hungarian invaders."

Ukraine was not expected to reclaim its sovereign territory from Hungary in light of Ukraine's other neighbors with aims of dismembering Ukraine, including Poland and Romania.

"For the Poles themselves realize the nerve center of the Ukrainian movement is steadily growing in strength and that the day is near when neither Warsaw, nor Moscow, nor Bucharest, nor anyone else will be able to resist it any longer," the editorial added. "That is

(Continued on page 12)

## COMMENTARY

# Russia's genocidal war against Ukraine and the Grapes of Wrath

by Lubomyr Luciuk

I have written before that I am a man of conflicted faith. Yet, even though I lecture as a professor of political geography, I cannot but bear witness to Ukraine's agony through the lens of my religion, the faith of my Ukrainian Catholic ancestors. To that I confess, wholeheartedly. And so, Ukraine's tortures have become, as it were, my daily bread. I eat its distress, yet gag as I do, symbolically consuming the flesh and blood of the many now being murdered by Russia's legions. The land of my predecessors has again become a Golgotha, a place of skulls. This is all Vladimir Putin's doing. It is happening as we approach the most sacred day in any Christian's calendar, Easter, marking the triumphant Resurrection from the dead of Jesus, the Christ.

What is happening as I write is only a prelude to the coming Passion of Ukraine, an outrage that will soon occur. As we stand by, an entire country will be scourged and a concerted attempt made at its extinction. Even before that, we shall mark a kind of Lent for Ukraine, indeed those 40 days are already upon us. Set aside in the liturgical calendar, this is a period that allows Christians the world over to reflect on what Jesus endured after he went into the desert, alone, to pray and fast, and where he was tempted sorely by Satan. Ukrainians are in that same wasteland now, and they are being put to the test. The fate of Europe may well depend on how they respond.

Their tormentor is none other than Putin. His designs are devilish. Left unchecked, this KGB man in the Kremlin, this president-in-perpetuity of the so-called Russian "Federation," will despoil the world you and I knew only short days ago. In large measure he already has. The coming new world order, from which Ukraine is being excised by force, will not be to your liking. We should have forearmed ourselves against this day, for did not W.B. Yeates raise the clarion call, more than a century ago, warning of this moment in the history of humankind when he wrote the following:

"The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,  
and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction,  
while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity."

That rough beast has now come. He is Putin, Russia's slouching tsar. Soon he will offer a kind of communion to those he is sacrificing, ironically in the very breadbasket of Europe. All they must do is eat of his bread, acquiesce to his corrupted vision of how Ukraine never existed, and never will, accept an erasing from memory of the last three decades of independence, as if that time was nothing more than a delusional mirage, best forgotten. Should the Ukrainians break bread with Putin, should they accept this first temptation, their nation will return to the Russky Mir (the Russian world), absorbed into the oblivion of his imperium.

They haven't, and they won't. This explains Putin's rage, his frustrated impotence. Still, he is far from spent. So, he will try to entice the Ukrainians into laying down their arms, insisting that their continued resistance is futile, reminding them – and in this he will speak the truth – that

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they have not found much real help in this world, and they have no angels waiting to catch them should they leap into an existential fight against his minions. Why jump, he will ask the "Little Russians," as he derogatorily refers to Ukrainians, when all can see there are no angels below ready to break the fall.

Ukrainians will reject this second temptation. They know they are alone. Dismayed that they are, these are not a people willing to accept the yoke of Putin, the mark of this beast. Even when his final offer comes, when he places before them the chance to join his new Russian empire, they will not give in. Why? Because from 1991, from the very first days of Ukraine's independence, and indeed for many centuries before our time, Ukrainians have sought only their country's return to its rightful place in Europe. They have never lusted for their neighbours' lands or wealth. Rather, by their deeds and their words, most especially over these past three decades, they have stood firmly with the liberal democratic world, have committed themselves to a rules-based international order. They believed this to be the surest way toward securing a real peace, building up an architecture of stability sustained by the better angels they were told to believe are intrinsic to the nature of Western civilization. Since February 24, they have bitterly learned the fallacy of that faith. Now they are fighting and dying alone. They have seen the face of Judas.

And so, a gloating Putin appears before us, the very antithesis of goodness. Not a deranged despot, but rather an ever-clever secret policeman, a trickster, a relentless liar, nevertheless stands exposed as nothing less than a remorseless and wicked enemy of the light, anathema to everything any decent human being understands by words like truth or goodwill. If you think I'm exaggerating, just ask any Ukrainian. Yet much of the rest of the world still pretends, or prefers, not to see Putin for what he truly is, a species of evil now loosed upon this world. He must be cast back into the pit. There is no alternative.

Tragically, there is worse yet to come for Ukraine. The NATO countries, like that Pilate of yore, have washed their hands of Ukraine's fate, abandoning an entire nation to the savagery of Putin and his confederates. The latter's plans are plain. They seek not Ukraine's surrender, but a national extinction, the erasure of this country from the world's maps. Putin's agenda is nothing less than genocidal. Those who stand by and watch this happen are not innocent. Their platitudes won't stop Putin.

Someday, surely, a time for atonement will come. Those Russians who today succour Putin have the blood of Ukraine's innocents on their hands, and that gore will rain down upon the heads of their children and children's children, a baptism staining them for all time, branding them with the mark of Cain. This is how they will be recognized on the day when an even-greater enemy arrives to vanquish Muscovy. Too late, they will remember, as they wail and lament that the seeds of those future wars, of their destruction, were planted in our time because of their slavish obedience to Putin, even as the very soil of Ukraine was fertilized with the flesh of her many martyrs. When they should have staged a real Russian Revolution, they stood by.

As for those Ukrainians who survive, or

(Continued on page 10)



## COMMENTARY

# The contribution of Ukrainian warriors to the miracle on the Vistula

by Volodymyr Trofimovich

Russia's war on Ukraine has shown that Ukraine has strong partners. One of them is Poland. However, this partnership is not accidental, because at the beginning of the 20th century these two countries fought together against Bolshevik Russia.

On April 22, 1920, a political convention on cooperation was signed between the governments of the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) and the Republic of Poland, which went down in the history of diplomacy as the Warsaw Pact. An essential addition to that was the signing of a secret military convention two days later, which provided for a joint campaign of the two armies on right bank Ukraine to liberate it from the Russian aggressor.

On April 25, the combined forces (20,000 Polish and 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers) crossed the Zbruch River under the "For Our and Your Freedom" slogan. They headed for Kyiv, which they entered on May 7 almost without fighting the Bolsheviks. However, the latter very quickly gathered their military forces and launched an impressive counteroffensive.

The troops of the Western Front under the command of Mikhail Tukhachevsky moved toward the Polish capital, and the Southwestern Front, led by Alexander Yegorov, went to Lviv, occupied the right bank and Western Ukraine and entered the territory of Poland. Bolshevik troops captured Warsaw by approaching it in early August. The revived Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was in mortal threat, which would not only lead to its occupation by the Russian aggressor's army.

In that situation, the future of Polish statehood depended, to some extent, on the position of the Head of the Directory and Chief Ataman Symon Petliura. At that time, he understood that the troops of the Ukrainian National Republic were fighting side by side with the Poles, not for their independence, but for their honor. He, therefore, rejected the proposal of some of his allies to break the military convention with official Warsaw, to withdraw UNR troops (more than 50 percent of the soldiers of the Southern Front of the Polish Army were defending Galicia from the Bolsheviks) to the Carpathians to preserve them even at the cost of defeating Poland because he considered it a "betrayal of an ally."

It should be noted that, during the period under review, Ukrainian troops demonstrated outstanding heroism and courage both during the spring attack on Kyiv and

in defensive battles. That courage and heroism was recognized by the Polish military command at the time. In this regard, the warfare of the 6th Sich Rifle Division led by Col. (later general) Mark Bezruchko deserves special attention.

For 10 days, near Zamość, Poland, they repelled the powerful attacks of the 1st Cavalry Army, led by Semyon Budyonny. Due to the delay, the latter was unable to come to the aid of his troops near Warsaw. After suffering heavy losses and not capturing the city, they were forced to withdraw, heading for Volodymyr-Volynskyi in Ukraine. This enabled the Polish army to regroup and organize a vigorous defense of Warsaw. At the same time, Bezruchko's division carried out a devastating flank attack on the troops of the Western Front, which created favorable opportunities for the capital's defenders in the decisive battle of Warsaw on August 12-15 to repel the enemy's offensive and later go on the offensive against the Red Army, which ended in the September Battle of the Niemen River. The independence of the Second Polish Republic was saved, attributing the salvation of the state to providence.

On October 18, 1920, the head of the Polish state, Jozef Pilsudski, appealed to the Ukrainian allies.

"Our army remembers the bloody battles in which Ukrainian troops took part, the days of victories and the hours of trials. The blood we shed together and the mass graves laid the foundation stone for mutual understanding and the success of both peoples," he said.

In conclusion, there is a quote from Petliura's letter to the minister of war of the Ukrainian National Republic, Volodymyr Salsky, dated March 31, 1920, which now sounds like a testament.

"We – Poland and Ukraine – must reach ... an agreement to stand up to Moscow. The reference to Polish-Ukrainian misunderstanding in the past is not an argument for real modern politics. The new relations also require adjustments from the Polish government to past policies. Poland's vital interest is forcing it to have an independent Ukraine."

In the context of Russia's current aggression against Ukraine, and given that the new Polish and Ukrainian military doctrines identify Russia as a significant threat to the Eastern European region, it is worth hearing this very relevant position.

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and in the neighboring countries. Since most of the people fleeing are believers, Cardinal Czerny will affirm that religious assistance should be offered to everyone, with sensitivity to ecumenical and interfaith differences.

Finally, throughout the praiseworthy efforts to offer humanitarian responses and organize humanitarian corridors, there is great need for coordination, good organization and shared strategy in order to embrace people's sufferings and provide effective relief.

# NATO member countries, targets of Putin's military aggression, must act accordingly

by Eugene Czolij

Following a call with the Russian president on March 3, French President Emmanuel Macron indicated that "the worst is yet to come" and that Putin wanted to take all of Ukraine.

It is difficult to imagine what could be worse than perpetrating war crimes by indiscriminate daily bombardment of Ukraine's capital and other cities for over a week by the Russian military, killing civilians, including innocent children, and inflicting destruction on Ukrainian civil infrastructure.

In the early hours of March 4, however, the world was shocked when the Russian military shelled Europe's largest nuclear power plant, situated in the Ukrainian city Enerhodar in Zaporizhia Oblast. Incredibly, even after fire broke out at a training building for the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant, the shelling continued for some time, preventing Ukrainian firemen from extinguishing it.

Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba warned the international community on Twitter that the "Russian army is firing from all sides upon Zaporizhia NPP, the largest nuclear power plant in Europe. Fire has already broken out. If it blows up, it will be 10 times larger than Chernobyl! Russians must IMMEDIATELY cease fire, allow firefighters, establish a security zone!"

The attack was not an accident. It was a signal, and it is without historical precedent.

The Russians are familiar with that nuclear power plant since it was designed during the Soviet era. Moreover, The Globe and Mail reported that, according to Victor Buchnyev, an adviser to the mayor of Enerhodar, the attack force at the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant included representatives from Rosatom, the Russian state atomic energy corporation. Shelling the site was a particularly reckless act meant to signal that there is no line that Putin will not cross. It constitutes an act of nuclear terrorism.

The High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles warned on Twitter that "Shelling & resulting fire at Zaporizhia power plant can endanger the whole of Europe."

At the U.N. Security Council emergency meeting on Ukraine's Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant on March 4, U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield made these chilling remarks:

"By the grace of God, the world narrowly averted a nuclear catastrophe last night. We all waited to exhale as we watched the horrific situation unfold in real time. I applaud the ability of the Ukrainian operators to keep all six reactors in safe conditions while under attack and to report, as they were able to, to their nuclear regulator. [...]"

"Russia's attack last night put Europe's largest nuclear power plant at grave risk. It was incredibly reckless and dangerous. And it threatened the safety of civilians across Russia, Ukraine and Europe. [...]"

"The United States remains highly concerned that Russian military forces controlling the Chernobyl site have not permitted operators there to have a shift change since last week. [...]"

"Over the past nine days, we have witnessed the devastating impacts of

President Putin's war of choice on the Ukrainian people. Yesterday, the U.N. reported that Russia's invasion had turned half a million children into refugees. Russia has killed thousands of Ukrainians, and sacrificed thousands more Russian soldiers' lives in the process. Russia is destroying critical infrastructure which is denying people drinking water to stay alive and gas to keep people from freezing to death in the middle of winter," Ms. Thomas-Greenfield said.

By controlling the Chornobyl and Zaporizhia nuclear power plants, Putin has succeeded in weaponizing these civilian nuclear plants against the Euro-Atlantic world.

At the NATO ministers of foreign affairs extraordinary meeting in Brussels on March 4, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said, "We are not part of this conflict, and we have a responsibility to ensure that it does not escalate and spread beyond Ukraine because that would be even more devastating and more dangerous."

Set in the context of Putin's weaponization of civilian nuclear power plants, this statement fails to take into consideration the U.S. argument at the U.N. Security Council, namely: "Russia's attack last night put Europe's largest nuclear power plant at grave risk. It was incredibly reckless and dangerous. And it threatened the safety of civilians across Russia, Ukraine and Europe." The fact that NATO member countries are now directly threatened by Russia's military aggression contradicts Mr. Stoltenberg's assessment that NATO is "not part of this conflict."

Indeed, radiation does not need a Schengen visa to travel throughout Europe.

Moreover, NATO member countries have already reacted to what Putin has called a "special military operation," overtly supplying defensive lethal weapons to Ukraine and imposing severe sanctions against Russia, Putin and Russian oligarchs – clearly acts of aggression in Putin's eyes.

In order to ensure that Putin's military aggression against Ukraine actually ends in Ukraine, NATO member countries must assist Ukraine in enforcing a no-fly zone over its airspace in the event that NATO will not impose one. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has requested a no-fly zone, and civil society in the West has actively supported the move.

This can be accomplished by providing additional defensive lethal weapons to Ukraine, namely fighter jets, helicopters, drones, and effective anti-air defense systems. NATO member countries could also make the necessary arrangements for pilots to be placed under Ukrainian operational control as part of the International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine for the purpose of securing its airspace and protecting Ukrainian civilian infrastructure.

Russia's war crimes against Ukrainians, and Putin's expanding willingness to threaten NATO member countries – now including the risk of radiation leaks and fallout from two nuclear sites – must be stopped without further delay.

NATO member countries need to defend themselves immediately from Putin's escalating and overt threats to their individual and collective security.

*Eugene Czolij is president of non-governmental organization "Ukraine-2050" and former president of the Ukrainian World Congress (2008-2018).*

## Vatican...

(Continued from page 3)

sufferings and the protracted conflicts that no longer attract the world's attention. In addition, he will raise concern that African and Asian residents in Ukraine, also suffering fear and displacement, be allowed to seek refuge without discrimination.

There are also worrisome reports of increasing activities of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants at the borders

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# Chicagoans honor Ukraine by raising largest Ukrainian flag in the United States

by Rostyk Saciuk

PALATINE, Ill. – On the edge of Chicago's downtown, in what is normally an unremarkable little parking lot, scores of Ukrainian Americans and their friends gathered beneath a 200-foot flag pole on March 6 to take part in a unique, special demonstration of support for the brave men and women of Ukraine.

Thanks to the tremendous generosity of Sterling Bay Real Estate Company, which commissioned what is the largest Ukrainian flag in the United States, 1,800 square feet of blue and yellow now soars high above the neighboring rooftops.

Daniel Oleksiuk of Branch 31 (Palatine, Ill.) of the Organization for the Defense of Four Freedoms for Ukraine organized and officiated the flag raising ceremony.

The flag raising ceremony by Ukrainians and their friends in Illinois was dedicated to the people of Ukraine.

"I am angry," Mr. Oleksiuk said during the event. "The world is watching, and I ask, where are our leaders? I know of only one leader at this present moment: [Ukrainian] President [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy," he said as the audience applauded vigorously and loudly.

Under the direction of Commander Peter Bencak, the Ukrainian American Veterans of Post 32 carefully unfolded and spread out all 60 feet of the flag's total length.

Father Mykola Buryadnyk of Saint Joseph the Betrothed Ukrainian Catholic Church located in Chicago and Father Serhiy Kovalchuk of Saint Nicholas Ukraine Catholic Cathedral in Chicago blessed the flag, sprinkling its entire length with holy water.

Against the background of the collective song of the Ukrainian national anthem, all eyes were fixed upon the flag as it was sent off on its slow, 200-foot ascent. It had not travelled halfway before it met with the wind and tore itself free of veterans' hands, stretching itself out in its full glory to a crowd erupting in cheer. Almost immediately, car horn after car sounded from every direction, almost as if the city itself approved.

Perhaps it's a small thing, to fly a flag in the sky, but to this Ukrainian community the sight of their blue and yellow



Sterling Bay/Victoria Chikarov

**Ukrainian Americans and their friends gathered beneath a 200-foot flag pole on March 6 to raise what is believed to be the largest Ukrainian flag in the United States – a 1,800-square-foot blue and yellow emblem that now soars high above the neighboring rooftops.**

low flag, extended across the Chicago skyline in giant proportions, especially while everyone's thoughts are on a war-torn Ukraine, brought more than one attendee to tears.

"Never in my life would I have imagined a flag like this flying over Chicago. I know that my dad is really smiling down on us today," said an emotional Jerry Luzak of Palatine, Ill.

Standing beside Serhiy Koledov, consul general of

Ukraine in Chicago, Paul Bandriwsky of the Illinois Division of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America spoke about the flag raising ceremony.

"Every day that this flag is flying, commuters from [every direction] will be reminded of the men, women, children and innocents who are being slaughtered by the Russian invaders. They will be reminded of the brave men and women fighting to defend their homes," Mr. Bandriwsky said.

## Ukraine and Russia...

(Continued from page 1)

Russia's war against Ukraine can only be stopped by speaking directly with the Russian ruler.

"The war must end. We must sit down at the negotiating table," Mr. Zelenskyy said, adding that the conversation needed to be "honest and objective." The conversation must focus on "the interests of the people, and not outdated murderous ambitions," Mr. Zelenskyy said during a video address.

Mr. Zelensky has repeatedly called on Putin to speak with him directly. Putin has not accepted the offers.

Mr. Zelenskyy, speaking with Bild TV, said "the Russian side must also be ready to compromise – that's why they are called compromises."

The president confirmed that he has not had direct contact with Putin, but he said that, "only after direct talks between the two presidents will we be able to end this war."

Ukrainian and Russian officials previously met on multiple occasions since the full-scale war began on February 24. Three meetings between the two countries were held in Belarus and the talks concerned mostly discussion of humanitarian corridors.

The most recent negotiation, held in Antalya, Turkey, was the first high-level meeting between the foreign affairs ministers of Ukraine and Russia since the full-scale war began. The talks were moderated by Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

Russia repeated its demand to "denazify" Ukraine, recognize the separatist-controlled territories of Luhansk and Donetsk as independent, and recognize Crimea as Russian territory. Moscow has also sought a regime change in Kyiv.

The head of the Presidential Office of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, said that it was a mystery to him what "denazification" of Ukraine means.

Mr. Zelenskyy said that he is willing to consider some compromises. Still, Ukraine has ruled out ceding any territory and is pushing for security guarantees from the U.S. and Germany, alongside European Union membership, all of which could be unacceptable for Russia, which seeks Ukrainian "neutrality."

The most recent talks between the two sides featured Russia's Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov and

Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba.

Mr. Kuleba called for the creation of a humanitarian corridor to evacuate civilians from Mariupol, Ukraine, and to deliver humanitarian aid to the besieged city. He also called for a 24-hour ceasefire to address the most critical humanitarian issues.

At the press conference following the meeting, Mr. Kuleba stressed that Mr. Lavrov was not authorized to provide guarantees on both issues, but he said he urged the Russian official to pass Ukraine's request for a humanitarian corridor on to the Russian government.

"I heard from the Russian side today that they link the ceasefire to Putin's demands on Ukraine. Ukraine has not given up and will not give up. We are ready for diplomatic decisions, but, while they are not there, we will selflessly defend our land from Russian aggression," Mr. Kuleba said.

Turkey is expected to play an important role as a mediator that can help end Russia's war against Ukraine. The country was represented at the talks by Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

Mr. Kuleba expressed gratitude to Turkey for its political and humanitarian support of Ukraine against the backdrop of Russia's barbaric war against the Ukrainian people. Mr. Kuleba informed his Turkish counterpart about the current situation in Ukraine. He spoke about the issue of war crimes and targeted shelling by Russian troops of civilian facilities in Ukrainian cities. Russian artillery fire has killed civilians, including children.

"Russia's military is barbarically shelling hospitals, kindergartens and homes," Mr. Kuleba said. "Civilians are being killed and injured. A particularly high-profile crime is the aerial bombing of a maternity hospital and children's hospital in Mariupol. The world must act decisively to stop war crimes and crimes against humanity on the part of the Russian Federation."

The foreign affairs ministers discussed potential steps to end Russia's hostilities against Ukraine. Mr. Kuleba thanked Mr. Çavuşoğlu for organizing the talks with Mr. Lavrov.

"Ukraine has arrived for talks with a strong position. Thanks to the steadfastness of the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, our diplomacy, our defense forces, the entire Ukrainian people and the support of our partners, the Russian invaders are receiving a decent rebuff on all fronts," Mr. Kuleba said.

He outlined three key issues he insisted on at the meet-

ing with Mr. Lavrov.

"Immediate ceasefire, improvement of the humanitarian situation in Mariupol, Kharkiv, Sumy, Volnovakha and other Ukrainian cities, and withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine," Mr. Kuleba said.

He called on Turkey to continue working with Moscow to stop the bloodshed in Ukraine.

Before the meeting of foreign affairs ministers, the Ukrainian delegation held negotiations with Russian officials in Belarus. The third meeting of the Ukrainian and Russian delegations in the framework of the ceasefire talks took place on March 7.

"To date, there are no results that significantly improve the situation, but consultations will continue," Mykhailo Podoliak, adviser to the head of the Presidential Office of Ukraine, said after that meeting.

On February 28, the Ukrainian and Russian delegations held a first round of talks in Belarus. According to Mr. Podoliak, negotiations between the delegations were difficult and did not result in any significant progress on bringing peace to Ukraine.

A second round of talks between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations took place on March 3, but it did not achieve any significant results.

"There is no world security system anymore. After the start of the war, this is obvious. It must be built from scratch," said Andriy Yermak in an interview with Ukrainska Pravda. "And, of course, we are primarily interested in building this system of world security, in which Ukraine will have certain real, legally established [security] guarantees."

Mr. Yermak said Ukraine recalls the experience of the Budapest Memorandum, which was concluded in 1994 and sought to provide Ukraine with some security assurances after Kyiv peacefully gave up what was at that time the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world.

"This is a tragic experience paid for by the blood of our people," Mr. Yermak said. "And so, today, we will not agree to any chatter. We will talk only about ... Ukraine's international security system."

"Everyone understands that Ukraine is fighting not only for itself, but also for Europe and the whole world. Therefore, they all understand that helping Ukraine is not charity. ... And every dollar invested, every little help to Ukraine, is worked out by our heroes who risk their lives," Mr. Yermak said.





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## Russia's...

(Continued from page 6)

somehow escape this war, their memories will forever be infused with a bitterness that can never be extirpated. These grapes of wrath will sooner or later be harvested, then pressed. Over the passage of time, that juice will become a nectar of aging vengeance, a wine that can never slacken or satiate their profound thirst for retribution, yet it will become an elixir that will sustain a cause borne forward, tainting even those as yet unborn.

Ukrainians never were Russians, are not Russians now, and certainly never will be after having suffered the devastation and dismemberments of the days of Ukraine's Passion. The only "good tidings" on offer, a balm for those who somehow endure, is that even as so many have been sacrificed to a Moloch, their Ukraine has won this war, its true struggle for independence. Moscow has now lost Ukraine forever. No matter what the battlefield outcomes, Putin's imperial project has been polluted and made putrid, and his final failure is certain. Godspeed that day. Until that time comes, this will be Ukraine's only gospel, the only good news emerging from this apocalypse now.

Yes, the Ukrainian nation still resists the Russian foe. That dogged struggle reminds the world of how tyranny must be confronted. Yet the heroic Ukraine we see before us cannot last forever. Be it tomorrow, or the next day, or even weeks from now, those fighting this war in defense of their homeland will be beaten down, and many of the country's best people will be butchered or driven into exile. Ukraine's Passion will then end. In the wake of this holocaust, what remains of the modern Ukrainian state will be buried. But do not



Courtesy of Lubomyr Luciuk

**An unidentified man embraces a large crucifix in Lviv, Ukraine, earlier in the week.**

think this represents any final solution to the Ukrainian question. I say to you now that it does not. For just as surely as Ukraine's crucifixion is upon us, so, too, Ukraine will arise from its Russian-dug tomb. With that Ukrainian Resurrection there will be a reckoning. Those who drew Ukraine's blood, and those who abandoned Ukraine, will not escape judgement. Know, too, that Ukraine's Second Coming will not be a herald of the West's salvation. Putin, and all who permitted his predations, are tomorrows damned. One day they will drink of the juices oozing from these grapes of wrath.



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# Russia's...

(Continued from page 1)

has increasingly started to raze whole villages and larger cities to the ground.

The lost momentum of trying to take over huge swaths of land the size of Texas or France has raised fears that Russian bombardments would continue to intensify amid the failure of Mosco's ground forces to achieve their objectives of taking key cities in Ukraine, among them Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol and Dnipro.

"Russian forces appear to be reverting to their old methodology of leveling cities and apparently indiscriminate bombing," U.S. Army Col. Yevgeny "Eugene" Vindman told USA Today, referring to what Russia did to the Chechen capital of Grozny or Aleppo in Syria.

"The civilian death toll is likely to skyrocket," Mr. Vindman said, adding that, "Russian forces are underperforming, and Ukrainian forces are overperforming."

Some 500 civilians have been killed and another 1,335 wounded so far, the U.N. human rights office says, while admitting that its assessment is incomplete and most likely



An infographic shows Russia's combat losses through March 8 since it renewed its invasion of Ukraine on February 24.



A map of Ukraine shows the movement of the Russian military inside the country as of March 9.

understated.

"This concerns, for example, the towns of Volnovakha, Mariupol [both in Donetsk Oblast], Izyum [in the Kharkiv region] where there are allegations of hundreds of civilian casualties," the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said in a statement.

Ukraine says more than 2,000 civilians have been killed. For example, the mayor of Mariupol, the Donetsk region's second-largest city under Ukraine's control, said on March 9 that at least 1,200 civilians have been killed by Russian bombardment.

Mr. Zelenskyy, the nation's second war-time president, said that 52 Ukrainian children have so far been killed "in the middle of Europe, in the year 2022."

Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, which started in 2014 with the forcible seizure of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, is the European continent's only ongoing bloody war.

"The enemy [Russia] can destroy the walls of our homes, our schools, our churches," Mr. Zelenskyy said in his daily address to the nation on March 9. "It can shatter Ukrainian enterprises. But it will never get to our soul, our heart, to our ability to live freely and fight bravely."

After several failed attempts, Kyiv and Moscow finally agreed to a 12-hour ceasefire that started at 9 a.m. Ukraine time on March 9 to evacuate civilians from six areas.

They included Mariupol and Volnovakha in the Donetsk

region; Enerhodar in the Zaporizhia region; Sumy in Sumy Oblast; Izyum in the Kharkiv region; and the Kyiv suburbs of Vorzel, Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka and Hostomel.

Hours before safe passage was supposed to commence, 21 civilians, including two children, were killed in Sumy northeast of Kyiv during a Russian air raid, according to the regional prosecutor's office. Located 48 kilometers from the Russian border, Sumy has faced incessant shelling and bombardment since the second day of Moscow's latest invasion.

Earlier this week, the Red Cross said a planned evacuation of battered Mariupol was delayed when land mines were discovered along the route, presumably by the Russian military.

Before the evacuation of the besieged port city of Mariupol, its residents had been without water and electrical power for nine days. On March 9, a devastating Russian airstrike hit a children's hospital with a maternity ward, wounding at least 17 people, according to an Al Jazeera report which cited Volodymyr Nikulin, a top regional police official, as the source of the information.

On March 8, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi reported that more than 2 million people have fled Ukraine as refugees in just 12 days. He said more

(Continued on page 13)

# Putin losing...

(Continued from page 2)

punishment it is now experiencing. Its fiscal counter-measures have proven ineffectual and misdirected (Kommersant, March 3).

Moscow's working assumption was that the accumulated financial reserves (much of it in foreign currencies) would suffice to neutralize the immediate damage (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, February 22), but those funds have largely been frozen by the SWIFT ban. Moreover, the breakdown of crucial supply chains cannot be compensated for by emergency funding, while the coffers have been depleted by well-targeted sanctions (Publico.ru, March 3). It is not the mid- or long-term effects of Western economic blows that are shaking the Russian government, but their immediate impacts, most of which are unexpectedly shocking and impossible to mitigate through trade with China (Republic.ru, March 3). Russian domestic air traffic is set to be grounded because leasing agreements are being canceled and the fleet of Boeings and Airbuses cannot be serviced (Kommersant, March 5). Western companies are closing their businesses in Russia, so Muscovites rushed in great numbers to make their last purchases at IKEA stores, which exacerbated the public run on banks (Novaya Gazeta, March 4).

Supply shortages and sharply falling incomes are inevitably influencing domestic support for the war. The maximum-volume propaganda campaign fails to gin up much pro-war fervor because even the harshest measures against dissent cannot obfuscate the daily encounters with grim reality (Rosbalt, March 3). Unsurprisingly, most Russian independent media platforms either closed or were forced to curtail coverage of the military campaign; what was remarkable was the authorities' delay in intro-

ducing severe censorship, thus leaving the flow of news in the crucial first days of the invasion unaffected (Republic.ru, March 4). That public shock of discovering the truth about the war cannot be undone. Moscow has effectively lost the information war not only in the international arena but also at home, as public opinion keeps absorbing the news about expulsions of Russian teams from major sporting events and the expanding cultural boycott of Russia (Kommersant, March 3).

After many "hybrid" operations targeting various Western vulnerabilities with such innovative tools as "REvil" hackers or "Wagner" mercenaries, Moscow has found itself on the receiving end of a multi-pronged "hybrid war"; Russia's counter-strikes, like the closure of its airspace for transit flights to Asia, tend to backfire (Meduza, March 4). What must be particularly painful for Putin is that his personal war against Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has yielded a disaster that no amount of adulation from his courtiers can hide. Inexperienced as he is, the commander of the Ukrainian resistance has grown into a heroic leader who can speak truth to his nation and address the European Parliament with demands for greater support, and receive a standing ovation for it (News.ru, March 2).

In contrast, Putin's reputation as a calculating schemer has plummeted not only because of his blatant lies and historical absurdities but also because of the starkly exposed incompetence in planning and executing the military campaign, guided by his blind belief in Ukraine's inability to defend its sovereignty (ThePage.ua, March 2, originally published but no longer available at Moscow Echo). Even Russian mainstream military commentators in Moscow begin to concede, carefully and elliptically, that the long-prepared blitzkrieg has failed. And, in the protracted conflict, Ukraine is gaining strength while time is not working in Russia's favor (see EDM, Nezavisimoe Voennoe

Obozrenie, March 3). Putin's reassurances that the invasion is going "according to plan" depart from the reality of a stalled offensive and brutal bombardments. He is increasingly acting as someone cornered, with no good options left (Kommersant, March 5; Svoboda.org, March 2).

In the coming days, the deeper the Russian troops get stuck in the mud, out of fuel outside Kyiv, or locked in the quagmire of street-fighting in Kharkiv's suburbs, the less will Moscow be able to threaten NATO with escalation in other theaters, for instance, in the Baltic. And, in turn, China's leadership will surely be decreasingly interested in rescuing its hapless "strategic partner." Ukraine's courage and ability to absorb a few more local setbacks in the hopes of eventual victory are not in doubt; Russia's capacity to survive the looming disaster of defeat increasingly is in doubt.

*The article above is reprinted from Eurasia Daily Monitor with permission from its publisher, the Jamestown Foundation, www.jamestown.org.*

# Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

the day when a free and independent Ukraine will arise."

Putin's invasion of Ukraine this year was expected by Moscow to be an easy win, but the victory that Putin seeks is not yet within his grasp thanks to the fierce resistance of the Ukrainians and the low morale of the invading army. Hitler marched in Prague in 1939 as a sign of the ease with which Germany took Czechoslovakia, but Putin unlikely to be able to do the same in Ukraine.

Source: "Carpatho-Ukraine's heroic stand," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, March 18, 1939.



## Russia's...

(Continued from page 12)

than half – some 1.2 million people – have fled to Poland. The U.N. high commission on refugees also reported that, “As the situation continues to unfold, an estimated 4 million people may flee Ukraine.” The situation has quickly become Europe’s worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.

### Incremental advances

Despite the relative lull in fighting, Russia is still advancing to encircle the key cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Mykolayiv and Chernihiv. U.S. intelligence says that all of Russia’s pre-invasion force of some 150,000 troops and military hardware are now deployed in the country.

Most of Moscow’s successes have been in the south where Russia is trying to create a land bridge from its mainland to occupied Crimea. If Mariupol along the Azov Sea and Odesa along the Black Sea coast fall, Ukraine will be landlocked from both seas.

The Center for Defense Strategies, a Kyiv-based think tank, said earlier this week that about one-third of that invasion force has been destroyed or rendered incapable of continued fighting.

More than 12,000 Russian military personnel have been killed as of March 8, according to Ukraine’s military.

A U.S. intelligence briefing at the House of Representatives said that Russia has lost up to 4,000 troops, though they added that analysts had “low confidence” in that number because of the difficulty of verifying information on the ground in Ukraine, an NBC news report said.

Meanwhile, Ukraine isn’t disclosing its casualty figures and Russia only said it lost about 500 personnel in the first days of the renewed offensive against Ukraine.

“Russia will not be able to sustain such casualties for very long,” Mr. Vindman said.

For example, Ukraine said that on March 8 Russia lost “more than 400 servicemen” among “14 separate purpose brigades” who are regularly stationed in Khabarovsk in the Far East in a battle somewhere “on the territory of Ukraine.”

At midnight on March 9, Ukraine’s military acknowledged it no longer fully controls the Kyiv satellite towns of Borodyanka, Kopyliv, Bucha and Demidiv. About 17 Russian battalion tactical groups hold the southern “settlements of Kherson, Enerhodar [the site of Europe’s largest nuclear power station] and Vasylivka,” the Ukrainian military said.

Successful, albeit minor, counterattacks



The Center for Defense Strategies

**Russian bombardment destroyed a high-rise residential building in the city of Sumy, Ukraine.**

were launched against encircling Russian forces in the southern port city of Mykolaiv, Kharkiv in the east and in Mariupol. Kyiv officials said Russian forces were pushed back northward to prevent continuous shelling. Combined forces in Mariupol neutralized manpower, destroyed hardware and captured some Russian military equipment for use. Near Mykolayiv, about 30 helicopters were destroyed further south at an airbase in the Kherson region.

Invoking British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Mr. Zelenskyy on March 8 addressed Britain’s parliament via video link to say that Ukraine will “fight to the end.”

Ukrainian military reports also pointed out that a possible invasion directly on western Ukraine is possible. They cited intelligence reports saying that Belarusian forces are on the highest level of combat readiness. There is a direct route from the Brest region in Belarus to Lviv through Volyn Oblast in Ukraine. Kyiv, however, has noted that the high military command of Belarus is “demoralized” and unwilling to participate on the ground to help Russia.

### Nuclear danger

The inactive yet still hazardous Chornobyl nuclear power plant is no longer transmitting communication, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced on March 9. IAEA director Rafael Mariano Grossi said that the plant’s 210 staff need to be rotated, implying they are being held hostage by occupying Russian forces who are not allowing staff shift changes. Ukraine’s energy regulator said that there is limited access to food, water and medicines at Chornobyl where a nuclear energy containment area is located, AFP reported.

### War crimes, sanctions, talks

Russia didn’t appear at The Hague on March 7 for a hearing on genocide at the U.N.’s International Court of Justice. Kyiv filed the complaint.

Also, the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court is already investigating Russia for possible war crimes or crimes against humanity in Ukraine.

There is also a second trial at another international court currently beginning. The prosecutor at the International Criminal Court has already begun investigations into whether the Russian president or other leading figures in the Kremlin are responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity in Ukraine.

Mr. Vindman said “there is evidence that Russian attacks are in violation of the laws of war.”

In speaking with CNN’s Anderson Cooper at night on March 9, Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, the chief rabbi of Kyiv and Ukraine, called the attacks in Ukraine a “mass murder of civilians. That’s what it is.”



Armed Forces of Ukraine

**Residents in Odesa placed sandbags around one of the most recognizable and famous monuments in the city, the statue of the Duc de Richelieu, which was erected in honor of the city’s exiled French governor in the early 1800s.**

Asked by Mr. Cooper whether he was surprised the Russian military has attacked Ukrainian civilians, Mr. Bleich said, “A week ago, or two weeks ago, it would have been unbelievable. But I think, at this time, the world should have their eyes open and understand that this is a war, not against an army of citizens, but it’s a war against a people.”

“It’s not even ironic, it’s cynical that Putin said that he’s coming to save the Russian people from the Ukrainian fascists when indeed he’s been bombing Russian speaking cities and just wiping them off the face of the earth,” the rabbi said.

“It doesn’t even shock me that he’s bombed hospitals, orphanages and children’s homes. It’s just anything and everything. It’s a war against everyone to wipe out everyone,” Mr. Bleich said. It is an effort to “bring Ukraine down to its knees to give in.”

While the U.N. and the ICC begin to investigate the case of war crimes being committed in Ukraine, Putin earlier in 2019 revoked a key element of the Geneva Convention that authorizes investigations into alleged war crimes against civilians.

Turkey is expected to mediate discussions in Ankara between Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, on March 10. Three rounds mid-level discussions since the invasion between the two countries have ended inconclusively.

### Neutrality?

In an interview with ABC news, Mr. Zelenskyy also suggested that Ukraine is willing to accept non-bloc NATO status after saying he had “cooled down” on the idea of Ukraine formally joining the alliance.

“Regarding NATO, I have cooled down regarding this question long ago after we

understood that NATO is not prepared to accept Ukraine,” Mr. Zelenskyy said on March 7.

His deputy chief of staff, Ihor Zhovkva, said two days later that Ukraine won’t surrender a “single inch” of territory, however, in an interview with Bloomberg Television.

“Surely, we are ready for a diplomatic solution,” Mr. Zhovkva, who works on foreign policy, said. He added that security guarantees should come from Ukraine’s neighbors, though he did not offer additional information or elaborate on his statement.

### Fears, more sanctions

At the same U.S. House of Representatives Intelligence Committee hearing, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said she thinks the increasingly isolated Russian president will further clamp down on Ukraine.

It’s a war that “he cannot afford to lose,” Ms. Haines said, adding that the already bloody conflict could transform into a protracted “persistent and significant insurgency.”

“I think Putin is angry and frustrated right now,” CIA Director William Burns added, according to a Newsweek report. “He is likely to double down and try to grind down the Ukrainian military with no regard for civilian casualties.”

Russia faced further severance from the global financial system when the U.S. announced it was banning Russian oil imports, “cutting [off] the main artery” of Russia’s economy.

About 8 percent of U.S. oil imports come from Russia. The U.S. doesn’t import any Russian natural gas.

Meanwhile, British Business Minister Kwasi Kwarteng announced that the country will phase out Russian imports of oil and related products by the end of the year.

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Armed Forces of Ukraine

**A Ukrainian soldier who goes by the nom de guerre Ultras has served in the Ukrainian military since 2014 when Russia first invaded. Before Russia launched its unprovoked, premeditated full-scale war against Ukraine, the soldier was a small business owner and leader of the Kirovohrad soccer team’s Zirka (star) fan club.**



## NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

ple the right to freedom of assembly and stifle the voices of those who disagree with Russia's war in Ukraine," said Hugh Williamson, Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The escalating police violence illustrates the length to which Russian authorities will go to intimidate and silence dissent." During mass protests on March 6, police detained about 5,000 people in 69 cities, according to OVD-Info. On March 8, International Women's Day, the police detained dozens of protesters at peaceful rallies across the country. That day women across Russia laid flowers next to monuments to protest the war. Since February 24, Russian authorities have clamped down on public expressions of disapproval of the government's official narrative, including by blocking independent media, criminalizing independent media reporting and calls to end the war, and by targeting peaceful protesters, HRW noted. It said social media posts document-

ing incidents on March 6 show peaceful protesters being detained for holding placards, marching and chanting "no to war!" and for wearing ribbons or clothing in the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag, and for filming arrests while simply while passing by. Police used violence against protesters on multiple occasions, as OVD-Info reported at least 34 cases in which the police beat protesters on March 6. (RFE/RL)

### Russia confirms presence of conscripts

Russia's Defense Ministry has confirmed for the first time that conscripts are among military personnel involved in Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said on March 9 that "some of the conscripts" had been captured by Ukrainian armed forces, adding that "almost all of the conscripts" had been recalled from Ukrainian territory. Top Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, have insisted that there are no conscripts involved in the invasion, emphasizing that only soldiers serving on a contract basis are fighting in Ukraine. But

Ukraine has placed numerous videos of captured Russian soldiers, many of whom were conscripts between the ages of 18-20, on the Internet. Many Russian mothers have taken to social media to find out where their sons are, while rights groups say they have been swamped with calls from family members of soldiers looking for information. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on March 9 that Putin ordered the Military Prosecutor's Office to investigate how conscripts had turned up in Ukraine and to the punish officials who allowed their presence there. (RFE/RL's Russian Service, with reporting by Zvezda TV, TASS and The Moscow Times)

### London to supply anti-aircraft missiles

Britain intends to supply Ukraine with anti-aircraft missiles to help its defense against the Russian invasion, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said on March 9. "It is vital ... that Ukraine maintains its ability to fly and suppress Russian air attack," Mr. Wallace told parliament. "In response to Ukrainian requests, the government has taken the decision to explore the donation of STARStreak high-velocity man-portable anti-air missiles. We believe that this system will remain within the definition of defensive weapons, but will allow the Ukrainian force to better defend their skies." Mr. Wallace said the decision had been made in principle to supply the weaponry, and the government was working out how to get them into Ukraine and train Ukrainian forces to use them. If confirmed, the supply would mark a significant step in Britain's support for Ukraine. That support, however, has been limited to defensive weaponry. Separately, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said at a joint news conference in Berlin with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on March 9 that his country will continue to send military equipment and defensive weapons to Ukraine. So far, many NATO countries, along with other Western allies, have supplied only defensive weaponry to Kyiv amid threats from Moscow that it would make the donors a direct party to the conflict and thus open to retaliation. (RFE/RL, based on reporting by Reuters, AFP and AP)

### EU agrees to broaden sanctions

The European Union (EU) has agreed to expand its third round of sanctions being imposed on Russia to target a larger number of oligarchs and officials close to President Vladimir Putin over Moscow's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The French Presidency of the European Council said in a series of tweets on March 9 that the new sanctions added would apply to "Russian leaders and oligarchs and their family members implicated in the Russian aggression against Ukraine." The third round of sanctions being imposed on Russia, the largest EU package agreed since the invasion began on February 24, includes a freeze on the Russian central bank's assets in the bloc and a ban on Kremlin media in the European Union. The French presidency said the new sanctions approved on March 9 also include targeting the maritime sector and measures aim at excluding three Belarusian banks from the SWIFT financial payment messaging system, while also clarifying the issue of cryptocurrencies and giving a complete list of technologies and goods that cannot be sold between Russia and the bloc. It did not detail which banks in Belarus, which has assisted Moscow in the invasion, are affected or which technologies and goods are included in the sanctions. "These sanctions will be formally adopted by the Council by written procedure with a view to their rapid publication in the Official Journal of the European Union," it said. The EU has now sanctioned 680 people and 53 entities since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, recognized the independence of the

regions of Luhansk and Donetsk in eastern Ukraine and invaded the country in February. (RFE/RL)

### London issues new aviation sanctions

Britain unveiled new aviation sanctions on March 9 under which any Russian plane can be detained, while exports of aviation or space-related goods to Russia can also be banned. One aircraft was immediately impounded under the new restrictions. "Banning Russian-flagged planes from the U.K. and making it a criminal offense to fly them will inflict more economic pain on Russia and those close to the Kremlin," Foreign Affairs Secretary Liz Truss said. A Foreign Affairs Office statement said the ban includes any aircraft owned, operated or chartered by anyone connected with Russia or designated individuals or entities and will include the power to detain any aircraft owned by persons connected with Russia. Transport Minister Grant Shapps said one private jet had already been impounded while further investigations were carried out. The Telegraph newspaper reported that the plane was connected to a friend of Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich. The statement said that new restrictions will also prevent aviation and space-related exports, including insurance and reinsurance. This will mean cover is withheld on existing policies, while British-based insurers and reinsurers will be unable to pay claims on existing policies in these sectors, according to the statement. (RFE/RL, based on reporting by Reuters and TASS)

### Ukraine demands cease-fire at Chernobyl

Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba has called on Russia to agree to a cease-fire to allow repairs to the decommissioned Chernobyl power plant, the site of one of the world's worst nuclear disasters, after it was fully cut off from the electrical grid, raising the risk of radiation leaks. Ukraine's national energy company, Ukrenergo, said on March 9 that electricity to the plant was cut off due to a disruption of an electricity line connecting the Chernobyl nuclear plant with the electricity supplier in Kyiv. The outage puts at risk some 20 tons of waste that must be constantly cooled to keep radiation leaking and potentially endangering "Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Europe." "The entire power supply line of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and all its nuclear facilities controlled by the Russian Army has been damaged," Mr. Kuleba said on Twitter. "Chernobyl has lost power. I call on the entire international community to immediately call on Russia to cease fire and allow repair crews to restore the electricity supply as soon as possible," he said, noting reserve diesel generators had a 48-hour capacity to power the plant, after which the cooling systems will stop, "making radiation leaks imminent." The cause of the outage was not given, but during the launch of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on February 24, the still-radioactive site, which lies some 100 kilometers from Kyiv, was taken over by Russian forces during a pitched battle in the area. Since then, 210 Ukrainian personnel have been working at the nuclear plant without being rotated out for fresh workers. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on March 8 that Ukraine had informed it about the urgent need to rotate the nuclear plant's personnel. "[Ukraine] asked the IAEA to lead the international support needed to prepare a plan for replacing the current personnel and for providing the facility with an effective rotation system," the IAEA said in a statement. Last week, on March 4, Russian forces seized another nuclear power plant in the southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia.

(Continued on page 15)

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## Mariupol...

(Continued from page 1)

wreckage" of the hospital. He called the strike an "atrocious" as authorities try to establish how many people had been killed or wounded.

"Children are under the wreckage. This is an atrocity! How much longer will the world be an accomplice by ignoring terror? Close the sky right now! Stop the killings! You have power but you seem to be losing humanity," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote referring to his calls for NATO to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

The ground shook more than two kilometers away when the Mariupol complex was hit by a series of blasts that blew out windows and ripped away much of the front of one building, the AP news agency reported.

Police and soldiers rushed to the scene to evacuate victims, carrying out a heavily pregnant and bleeding woman on a stretcher.

Another woman wailed as she clutched her child. In the courtyard, mangled cars burned, and a blast crater extended at least two stories deep.

"Today Russia committed a huge crime," said Volodymyr Nikulin, a top regional police official, standing in the wreckage. "It is a war crime without any justification."

The White House condemned the "barbaric" use of force against civilians.

"It is horrifying to see the type of, the barbaric use of military force to go after innocent civilians in a sovereign country," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters when questioned about the strike.

"There are few things more depraved than targeting the vulnerable and defenseless," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin will be held "to account for his terrible crimes."

The Vatican's Secretary of State called the bombing "unacceptable."

"I say bombing a hospital is unacceptable. There are no reasons, there are no motivations, to do this," Cardinal Pietro Parolin told journalists who asked him at a

news conference in Rome about the Russian bombing.

The attack came on a day when Russia said its forces would "observe a regime of silence" from 10 a.m. Moscow time on March 9 to ensure safe passage for civilians wishing to leave Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and the Black Sea port of Mariupol, which the Red Cross has said faces "apocalyptic" conditions.

But by late afternoon, officials reported mixed results in shuttling people out of the battle zones, with safe corridors only being confirmed out of the eastern city of Sumy and the southern city of Enerhodar, the location of Europe's biggest nuclear power plant which Russian forces seized last week.

Russian forces were also reported to be preventing a convoy of 50 buses from evacuating civilians from the town of Bucha just outside of Kyiv, local authorities said, adding that talks continued on allowing the convoy to leave.

"Russia continues holding hostage over 400,000 people in Mariupol, blocks humanitarian aid and evacuation. Indiscriminate shelling continues," Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter. "Almost 3,000 newborn babies lack medicine and food."

In Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken described as "absurd" Russia's insistence that Ukrainians be evacuated through humanitarian corridors leading to Russia.

"It's offensive to suggest the Ukrainian people should seek refuge from the very government that has demonstrated such disregard for their lives," Mr. Blinken told reporters following a meeting with visiting British Affairs Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, who addressed the issue of NATO establishing a no-fly zone over Ukraine as Mr. Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials have demanded.

"The reality is that setting up a no-fly zone would lead to a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia. And that is not what we are looking at," Ms. Truss told reporters when asked if one could be introduced over a humanitarian corridor.

"What we are looking at is making sure that the Ukrainians are able to defend their

own country with the best possible selection of anti-tank weapons and anti-air defense systems," she said.

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights released fresh civilian casualty figures on March 9. It said that, since the start of the Russian invasion on February 24, 516 people have been killed and 908 injured.

It was quick to add in a statement that the agency "believes that the actual figures are considerably higher, especially in government-controlled territory and especially in recent days, as the receipt of information from some locations where intense hostilities have been going on has been delayed and many reports are still pending corroboration."

Sixty-seven children have died since the start of the Russian invasion, Ukrainian officials later said on March 9.

The number of people to have fled Ukraine since the start of the Russian invasion continues to grow, with the head of the United Nations' refugee agency, UNHCR, estimating on March 9 that the figure has now reached somewhere near 2.2 million people.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi told a news conference during a visit to Stockholm that "the time is now to try to help at the border," rather than hold discussions on the division of refugees between countries.

Early on March 9, with Russian missile and artillery attacks intensifying as the war stretched into its 14th day, Mr. Zelenskyy reiterated his call for a no-fly zone to protect Ukraine, saying that, otherwise, the international community would be responsible for a mass humanitarian catastrophe.

But many NATO countries, along with other Western allies, have supplied only defensive weaponry to Kyiv amid threats from Moscow that any aggression against Russian ground or air forces would make the donors a direct party to the conflict and thus open to retaliation.

On the diplomatic front, the European

Union continued to tighten sanctions on those "implicated in the Russian aggression in Ukraine," and the EU agreed on new measures that will target another 14 oligarchs, 146 members of Russia's upper house of parliament and their families.

The new sanctions also target the maritime sector and will exclude three Belarusian banks from the SWIFT financial payment messaging system, while also clarifying the issue of cryptocurrencies and giving a complete list of technologies and goods that cannot be sold between Russia and the bloc.

"We are further tightening the net of sanctions responding to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine," European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen wrote in a tweet.

Earlier in the day, Britain, which is not an EU member, unveiled new aviation sanctions under which any Russian plane can be detained while exports of aviation or space-related goods to Russia can also be banned.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris on March 9 began a tour of two European NATO allies, Poland and Romania, to discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the impact the war is having on the region, while Russian Affairs Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov travelled to Turkey, where he met with Mr. Kuleba on March 10.

Poland has publicly said it is willing to transfer its Russian-made MiG fighter jets to a U.S. military base in Germany to allow the aircraft to be handed over to Ukraine. But the Pentagon quickly dismissed the idea as untenable as warplanes flying from a U.S. and NATO base into airspace contested with Russia would raise the risk of the war expanding beyond Ukraine.

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## Zelenskyy...

(Continued from page 4)

redraw lines on a map by force, and get away with it. This is a pivotal moment in history. What Canada does now matters," the statement said.

Following his March 7 meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Mark Rutte, the prime minister of the Netherlands at 10 Downing Street in London, Mr. Trudeau announced another round of sanctions against Russia targeting 10 individuals. The move was first recommended by jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

On the list are Vladimir Solovyov, anchor of an eponymous television show on state-owned Russia-1; Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of the Russian TV news network RT, which Canadian broadcasters

have dropped from their lineups; and Konstantin Ernst, the CEO of television network Channel One Russia.

Others facing Canadian sanctions are Russia's health minister, Mikhail Murashko, and Dmitry Patrushev, the country's agriculture minister, along with Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov.

Also on the sanctions list are two officials of Russia's Federal Security Service – Victor Gavrillov and Dmitry Ivanov – who were allegedly involved in Mr. Navalny's arrest, according to a CBC News report.

Missing from that list is Putin confidante Roman Abramovich, who holds a 28.6 percent stake in London-based Evraz plc, which is providing more than half of the steel used for the 609-mile Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project between Alberta and British Columbia. He has also been involved in other major natural gas and oil pipelines in Canada.

Chornobyl. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi "said he was concerned about the sudden interruption of such data flows to the IAEA's Vienna headquarters from the two sites, where large amounts of nuclear material are present in the form of spent or fresh nuclear fuel and other types of nuclear material," the IAEA said in a statement. The fourth reactor at Chornobyl exploded in April 1986 during a botched safety test, sending clouds of radiation billowing across much of Europe. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

## NEWSBRIEFS

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The plant at Zaporizhia, on the banks of a reservoir on the Dnieper River, is the largest in Europe and generates more than one-fifth of Ukraine's domestic electricity. The UN's nuclear agency said on March 9 that it had lost touch with monitoring equipment at the plant in Zaporizhia, a day after it reported the same interruption at



With deep sorrow we announce that our father and uncle

### Bohdan John Borzemyky

passed away on February 18, 2022.

Funeral services were held on February 24, 2022, at St. Andrew's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Campbell Hall, NY.

Interment took place at Holy Spirit Cemetery in Campbell Hall, NY.

Remaining in deep sorrow:

children - Lidia, George and Laryssa  
extended family

May his memory be eternal -

Вічна Йому пам'ять!



With deep sorrow we announce that

### Irene Russnak

passed away peacefully on February 20, 2022, at age 100.

Irene was born in Ukraine on August 11, 1921, to the late Rev. Mychailo and Iryna Hanushevsky. She is predeceased by her infant daughter Christina and husband Myron. Also, by her brothers Myron, Theofil, Rev. Bohdan, Stephan and Taras; her sisters Maria Uhorchak, Marta Malkosh and Oksana Perih.

She is survived by many nieces and nephews in Ukraine, Austria, Germany, Canada and the United States.

There were no prior calling hours. Interment was at the convenience of the family.

Memorials may be directed to St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church, 940 E. Ridge Rd., Rochester NY 14621 or to UNWLA-Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine, 203 Second Ave., 5th Fl., New York, NY 10003

May she rest in peace.



## President...

(Continued from page 4)

thwarted the attempts by passing intelligence on to Ukrainian authorities.

### Early life

Volodymyr Oleksandrovych Zelenskyy was born to Jewish parents Oleksandr and Rymma on January 25, 1978, in Kryvyi Rih, which at that time was part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. His father is a professor and head of the Department of Cybernetics and Computing Hardware at Kryvyi Rih State University of Economics and Technology. His mother is a retired engineer. His grandfather, Semyon Zelenskyy, served in the Red Army during World War II. Semyon's father and three brothers were murdered in the Holocaust. Before elementary school, Mr. Zelenskyy spent four years in Mongolia (south of Siberia) where his father worked. He earned a law degree from the Kryvyi Rih Institute of Economics, but chose not to enter the legal field. His first language is Russian, and he is also fluent in Ukrainian and English.

### Comedy and roleplaying

At age 17, Mr. Zelenskyy began performing on comedy competition teams, and in 1997 he created and led the Kvartal 95 team which became the comedy troupe of the same name. The troupe performed for about five years, touring all over post-Soviet countries. In 2003 Kvartal 95 began producing television shows for Ukrainian channel 1+1, and in 2005 the team moved to Ukrainian TV channel Inter.

From 2008-2018 Mr. Zelenskyy had starring roles in nine films. He served as a board member and producer of television channel Inter from 2010-2012. He twice formally spoke out against the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture's intention to ban Russian artists from Ukraine. Russian politicians and artists petitioned to ban Mr. Zelenskyy's works in Russia when his Kvartal 95 donated 1 million hryvnias to the Ukrainian army during the war in the Donbas.

In 2015, Mr. Zelenskyy became the star of the television series *Servant of the People*, playing the role of the Ukrainian president. He played a high school teacher in his 30s who won the presidential election after a viral video showed him ranting against government corruption in Ukraine. Most of his acting work was done in the Russian language.

### Political career

In March 2019, Kvartal 95 formed the political party *Servant of the People*, named after the television series of the same name. Mr. Zelenskyy took the plunge into politics in an effort to restore trust in politicians, hoping to bring to power decent, professional people with the goal of altering the mood of the existing political establishment. Beginning on December 31, 2018, Mr. Zelenskyy led a successful, mostly virtual, presidential campaign to defeat incumbent President Petro Poroshenko in a matter of some four months. Mr. Zelenskyy won both the first round (March 31) and run-off elections (April 21) in 2019. One of his campaign promises was to serve only one five-year term in office.

During his presidential campaign, Mr. Zelenskyy promised to sign bills to fight corruption, including those which

would remove immunity from the president, members of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's Parliament) and judges. He also sought to sign a law on impeachment, and he wanted to reform election laws and those governing trial by jury.

### The presidency

Mr. Zelenskyy was inaugurated on May 20, 2019. He became the first-ever Jewish president of Ukraine, teaming up with his Jewish prime minister, Volodymyr Groysman. The new president, who called for early parliamentary elections, also created controversy with his appointment of Andriy Bohdan as head of the presidential administration. Mr. Bohdan had ties with Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. His requests to replace the foreign minister, defense minister, chief prosecutor and head of Ukraine's secret service were rejected by Parliament.

Mr. Zelenskyy's first major proposal to change the electoral system was rejected by Parliament. His second proposal on re-introducing criminal liability for illegal enrichment was not taken up by Parliament, but a similar bill from a group of deputies made the agenda. His attempt to remove immunity from lawmakers, diplomats and judges was tabled until after the 2019 parliamentary election. In 2020, his party proposed reforms to Ukraine's media laws with the intent to increase competition and loosen the dominance of Ukrainian oligarchs on television and radio. In January 2021, Parliament passed a bill updating and reforming Ukraine's referendum laws, which Ukraine's Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional in 2018.

Mr. Zelenskyy submitted legislation to the Verkhovna Rada that targeted the country's oligarchs, or individuals in Ukrainian society who wield outsized influence on economics or politics. The law sought to curb their influence on society.

The July 2019 parliamentary election saw the *Servant of the People* Party win 43 percent of the party-list vote, gaining 254 of the 424 seats in Parliament. Oleksiy Honcharuk took over as prime minister and Parliament confirmed a new defense minister, foreign affairs minister and head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).

On June 3, 2019, Mr. Zelenskyy appointed former president Leonid Kuchma as Ukraine's representative in the Tripartite Contact Group in an attempt to settle the Donbas conflict. Negotiations with Putin led to discussions of prisoner exchanges and a preliminary deal with the separatists where Ukraine would respect elections in the region in exchange for Russia withdrawing its troops from the region. The deal sparked much criticism from Ukrainian politicians and the public. By early March 2020, the Honcharuk government gave way to a new government led by Denys Shmyhal.

Mr. Zelenskyy has fully supported Ukraine's membership in the European Union and NATO, but he believed Ukrainian voters should decide memberships in these organizations by themselves through national referenda. His goal was for Ukraine to apply for a NATO Membership Action Plan in 2024. In February 2022, he applied for Ukraine to join the European Union.

### Russia conflict

In response to Russia's military build-up along Ukraine's borders in April 2021, Mr. Zelenskyy urged NATO to work on Ukraine's request for membership. In late November 2021, Mr. Zelenskyy accused Russia and Ukrainian oligarch

Rinat Akhmetov of planning to overthrow his government. Russia and Mr. Akhmetov vehemently denied the allegation.

The year 2022 brought renewed concern about a potential Russian incursion into Ukraine, and Mr. Zelenskyy made several appeals to the West to not create panic or spread disinformation and hysteria. He and Mr. Biden disagreed on the seriousness of the threat from Russia. As worries of a Russian invasion grew, Mr. Zelenskyy reminded Western nations that Ukraine had been granted security assurances in exchange for giving up the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal. He appealed to the West, asking countries to abandon their appeasement attitude toward Russia.

### Russian invasion

Shortly after the onset of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine on February 24, Mr. Zelenskyy recorded an address to the citizens of Ukraine and Russia. Speaking in Russian, he appealed to the Russian people to pressure their leadership to prevent the war. He refuted claims by the Russian government that there were neo-Nazis in the Ukrainian government.

On the morning of February 24, Putin announced his "special military operation" in the Donbas. Meanwhile, Russian missiles struck military targets throughout Ukraine and Mr. Zelenskyy declared martial law. Diplomatic relations with Russia were severed and Ukraine mobilized its defense.

February 25 saw Mr. Zelenskyy announce that Russia was also targeting civilian sites, adding that he was Russia's top target. He famously turned down offers that sought to help him evacuate from Kyiv, saying that he was needed most in the capital city to help with the fight. He earned worldwide recognition as a wartime leader of Ukraine, and he has been called a hero. Some have compared him to Winston Churchill.

### Personal

Mr. Zelenskyy married Olena Kiyashko in 2003, the two having met at Kryvyi Rih National University where she studied architecture. She later switched her focus to writing and worked as a comedy writer on her husband's comedy show. She was a co-founder of the Kvartal 95 Studio, where she still works as a screenwriter. Daughter Oleksandra was born in July 2004 and son Kyrlo was born in January 2013. Ms. Zelenskyy was very much against her husband running for president, but she campaigned by his side. As Ukraine's first lady, she has worked on causes that include children's health, equal opportunities for all Ukrainians and cultural diplomacy. She actively promotes fashions designed by Ukrainians.

As Ukraine's commander-in-chief, Mr. Zelenskyy has been thrust into a historic position of leading his country's battle against a much larger, better-equipped enemy force. The television star turned politician has become a role model of determination, courage and leadership, and he has become a worldwide hero, respected and admired for his composed presence and inspirational leadership.

Asked whether he needed to be evacuated from Ukraine, Mr. Zelenskyy famously replied, "The fight is here. I need ammunition, not a ride."

He was later asked by journalists whether he realized he had become an icon in Ukraine.

"I'm not iconic," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "Ukraine is iconic."

## Ukrainian war...

(Continued from page 2)

that once again Moscow is treating them as second-class citizens. This anger can easily spark new mass protests.

Commenting on an analysis of those numbers, Abbas Gallyamov, a former Putin speechwriter, said that he personally finds it difficult to imagine officers would single out such troops to take the greatest losses. But he conceded that, if a decision to do that were made, it would be "completely workable." The reason for that is that levels of trust in Moscow among people in many regions and republics is "minimal" given all the policies the central government has adopted against them in the recent past (Idelreal.org, March 2).

In some non-Russian republics in the North Caucasus, the number and prominence of protesters are sufficiently high that Moscow is beginning a crackdown against them, quite possibly following the center's usual tactic of trying out repressive measures outside the capital and only then applying them in the metropolises. One sign of this, Aleksandra Larintseva of Kommersant reports, is the appearance of "lists of enemies of the people" on social

media, directed at the North Caucasus. There, they are put up anonymously. But she asserts that the Kremlin is undoubtedly behind this initiative and speculates that the practice may spread, leading to popular reprisals against those opposed to the war. Also possible are more serious moves against them, such as loss of position or even the imposition of criminal penalties. Given what the status of "enemies of the people" meant in Stalinist times, many in the Russian Federation are alarmed by these developments (Kavkazr.com, March 4).

While the Kremlin can still count on its appointees in these republics to support the war in Ukraine at least in public, there is no question that the conflict has exacerbated tensions between Moscow and the non-Russians. Many of the latter see Putin's increasingly aggressive imperialism abroad as a sign that his imperialism at home, already at a level not seen since Soviet times, may be about to worsen. That sentiment is especially true in the Middle Volga and the North Caucasus, but it is found elsewhere as well (Idelreal.org, February 24; Kavkazr.com, February 28; 7x7-journal.ru, February 28).

Perhaps the most unexpected indication of non-Russian opposition to the war came when Karine Khabirova, the wife of the head of Bashkortostan, recently posted on social

networks her opposition to the war. Her husband, Radiy Khabirov, has not spoken out, but it seems likely he agrees with her at least privately. Although he may have welcomed the fact that his wife's post was quickly taken down (Mkset.ru, February 25). More dramatic but perhaps not yet as important have been calls by Middle Volga and Chechen opposition figures based abroad for their conationals to oppose the war by seeking either a new federal treaty that would block Moscow from pursuing wars or, if that proves impossible, even seeking full independence from Russia (Kavkazr.com, Idelreal.org, March 4).

How much support such appeals from abroad have within the republics inside the current borders of the Russian Federation remains unclear. But as Putin's war in Ukraine continues, it is entirely possible that ever more non-Russians will reach similar conclusions. This is likely sparking worries in the Kremlin, encouraging new efforts to repress such people. At some point, however, crack-downs may prove as counterproductive as throwing water on a grease fire.

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# Consequences of sports sanctions on Russia

by Ihor N. Stelmach

SOUTH WINDSOR, Conn. – Russia is disconnected from the rest of the world. In the two weeks since Vladimir Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has been banished economically (international sanctions have destroyed the ruble's value), diplomatically (even by some of Russia's allies) and culturally.

Russia's national and club soccer teams have been banned from international tournaments and matches, including 2022 World Cup qualifiers. The International Olympic Committee and many individual sports governing bodies have done the same. Football's Champions League final, scheduled to be played in St. Petersburg, Russia, in May, was relocated to Paris. The Formula 1 Grand Prix, due to race in Sochi, Russia, in September, was canceled. Outside of the sports world, Russia has been disinvented from this year's Eurovision song contest and will not see any new film releases from Disney, Warner Brothers or Sony.

One may surmise that cultural boycotts are more of a symbolic act rather than a serious menace to Russia's geopolitical status. Yet, by suspending Russia from the world's biggest sporting and cultural arenas, these organizations are truly sending a transparent, and, for Putin, potentially detrimental notice: If Russia continues to take

actions in Ukraine that are beyond the perimeters of the rules-based international order, it will be outcast by the rest of the world.

These types of cultural sanctions will barely affect Russia's economy, but they will have a significant effect on the Russian populace and even more so on Putin himself. The Russian ruler is an autocrat whose love of sports and competition is very much key to his cautiously created macho-nationalistic image – an image that has been engraved in memory by his hockey playing, wrestling and shirtless horseback riding. By banning Russia from various cultural and sports arenas, the many international organizations are denying Putin a very relevant propaganda platform, and, most importantly, severely weakening his crafted image of strength. Deciding to strip him of his titles as honorary president and ambassador of the International Judo Federation and stripping him of an honorary black belt in Tae kwon do are pronounced personal blows.

One could argue that Putin's love of sports was one reason he invaded Ukraine. It is his attempt to reassert Russia's strength and position as a global power. For many years Russia has invested much time and many dollars in making sure its national teams project a sense of greatness to the world. Sometimes Russia went way beyond the rules to succeed, as in the case of their

longtime state-sponsored doping program, which resulted in its athletes forfeiting dozens of Olympic medals and prevented the country from formally participating in the last two Olympics. However, Russian athletes did still compete in the Games as members of the Russian Olympic Committee.

Today, thanks to Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Russian and Belarusian athletes have been excluded from the 2022 Winter Paralympics. They may never again be allowed to compete on the world's grandest sporting stage.

This is not to say that the loss of the Olympics, Eurovision, or even his beloved judo is going to alter Putin's thinking about his move on Ukraine. Putin has ventured very deep into this crisis he created, and, being someone averse to losing, he will not retreat over minor matters like sports and art, especially when compared with Russia's economic and military challenges.

This does not mean cultural sanctions are not effective. Sports have an important historical significance to Russia. In 2010, when Russia was selected to host soccer's 2018 World Cup, then-Prime Minister Putin spoke vigorously about the sport's impact on his native Leningrad during World War II and how it helped Russians during a difficult time. It has been said that the Kremlin is quite sensitive about the issue because common Russian people care about sports.

Snubs by the New York Metropolitan Opera and the Cannes Film Festival do not compare to Russian athletes being excluded from the world's international sporting arenas. Putin desires to cast his power inward around Russia's successes in sport. This explains the Russians' devious depths of deception in their doping schemes.

To date, exclusions from sports and art align with Moscow's vast narrative that sanctions prove the West despises Putin, his oligarchs and the Russian people. However, the longer Russia is isolated from these spheres, the better chance that various punishments and sanctions have of cracking the state's narrative. Should the common Russian not be able to follow their soccer teams as they play in tournaments, watch the latest movies or enjoy in-person concerts, they will become less tolerant of their government's insulated policies. Indeed, many Russian pro athletes, musicians and other eminent people have expressed their opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In time, the Russian people may find themselves asking why their country has been barred from so much while other countries with questionable reputations are allowed entry.

*Ihor Stelmach may be reached at iman@sfgsports.com.*

## Refugees...

(Continued from page 3)

A young adult handicapped man who had been stretched out on a wooden bench in the waiting room, was hastily placed in his wheelchair and pushed toward the shelter where people carried him inside.

This journalist stayed in the waiting room and, together with other passengers, tried to catch some sleep in the increasingly cold hall. Outdoors the temperatures dropped below freezing, preserving patches of ice from the previous snowfall.

Just after 1 a.m., a massive explosion shook the waiting room and its tall windows located on opposite ends of the building. With each explosion, the windows shook, but, surprisingly, they did not shatter. Startled and afraid, the waiting train passengers rushed to leave the waiting room as heartbreaking screams of children echoed through the hall.

In the cramped bomb shelter – a damp space about 25 feet wide by 12 feet long lined on three sides by timber-framed bunk beds – people sat on the lower bunks, while others sat on the floor or simply stood waiting for the shelling to subside.

Two dogs, a Dachshund and a Pug in a fancy, black puffer coat, quietly growled at each other, while individuals in the shelter stayed silent, almost motionless.

A 17-year-old student, Nazari, accompanying his 12-year-old sister, said he was from Stanysia Luhanska, a town close to the frontline of the war that began in 2014 and has experienced intermittent shelling and shooting ever since.

Since February 16, pro-Russian forces increased their shelling of the town, the boy said.

Nazari, who originally provided his full name, called his relatives, who then asked that this reporter print only his first name because his family, still in Russian-held territory, could be punished for speaking with the press. In fact, most individuals interviewed for this story who were in or from the occupied territory were not comfortable with being identified, though they did want to speak about the war.

"The Russians fired 10 shells for every one the Ukrainian side used," Nazari said. "There was a lot of destruction in our town and many dead and wounded."

The Russian army, which had previously tried to conceal its presence in Luhansk, poured artillery – including devastating "grad" missiles – down onto the town, Nazari said.

Nevertheless, Moscow still ludicrously insists that only "separatist" forces are fighting in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

By about 12.30 p.m. on Saturday, a train finally arrived. Shelling resumed as passengers scrambled aboard. It continued as the train picked up speed.

It took five and a half hours for the train to reach Popasna, a town just 37 miles away. Railway staff would only say the delays were "because of fighting."

The train sat in Popasna for nearly three hours.

Shelling began again and each explosion seemed to creep closer toward the train. The tension among passengers increased, as some people prayed, and somewhere a woman laughed uncontrollably. In one train compartment, a woman told her seven-year-old daughter to lie on the floor and put her fingers in her ears to block out the sound of explosions.

Relief swept through the carriages when the train finally moved.

Some people cheered.

The mere motion of the train felt as if passengers were leaving danger behind. But this, of course, was just wishful thinking.

Jana, 43, travelled alone. She left behind her husband, a Ukrainian border guard near the city of Cherkasy.

"He just came home on Friday and insisted I pack a bag," she said. "He was worried that the Russian forces were going to overwhelm our side. We had very little time to say goodbye. I hope I will see him and our home again, but I don't know what the next few days will bring."

Maya, 38, whose husband is also in the military, was traveling with her sons, Danylo, age 7, and Ivan, age 8.

The two boys were aware of the war, but they seemed composed thanks to their mother's calm demeanor. They played

games on a mobile phone until their mother laid them to sleep. Only when their eyes were closed did she clasp her head in her hands and whisper to herself.

"God, how is this going to end?" she asked.

One passenger, Vitaly, a tall and fit man, seemed to have the bearing of a soldier. Vitaly had, in fact, spent three years in the Ukrainian Army. During his time in the military, which ended in 2020, Vitaly said he fought pro-Russian forces in his native Luhansk.

He also took part in a six-week special fighting skills course taught by British Army trainers. Vitaly said he wanted to reach Kyiv and join his country's defense of capital.

After the train stopped at a junction in the town of Liman, passengers going to Lviv via Kyiv boarded a different train across the platform. That train spent 24 hours waiting for their arrival.

Vitaly said goodbye.

"I know how to fight and I couldn't bear to stick around in Stanysia Luhanska being shelled by the stupid bastards there. So, I'm going to Kyiv. Whatever happens, we have to kill as many of them as we can and show that we did our best," Vitaly said.

Though they did not know it at the time, the town of Popasna was the last place they experienced shelling during their journey to the west of Ukraine.

As dawn broke on Sunday morning, the train slowly passed through the city of Dnipro, which straddles Ukraine's largest river of the same name. The train curved

northwest through magnificent landscapes of river, lakes, forest and low hills on one bank of the river.

On the other side, the tilled, black earth of the Ukrainian steppe stretched away to the horizon. That rich soil has historically made Ukraine "the breadbasket of Europe." For centuries, it has also attracted invaders.

Though the bombing stopped, railway staff repeatedly stopped the train to find safe routes west. As a result, the train meandered along local rail lines. In normal circumstances, it would have taken one of two main lines passing through the large towns of Vinnytsia or Zhytomyr, but both of those routes were hit by Russian missiles.

At one stop, train conductors handed out fruit juices, bananas and mandarins donated by the town's mayor for child refugees.

Danylo, the 7-year-old boy who was travelling with his mother and older brother, eagerly opened his juice.

"Oh, it's like it's my birthday!" he said.

One more anxious night passed and then the train pulled into Lviv's main railway station at 5:30 a.m. on Monday.

Disembarking passengers pushed their way through crowds of people desperate to board trains headed westward out of Ukraine to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania or Moldova.

Some fights broke out as people mobbed already-packed trains.

Exhausted passengers from Luhansk completed one grueling trip, though their journey out of Ukraine and to safety was far from over.



## Brothers of Cossack Mettle

Book one: *Ukraine* and Book two: *Homeland Lost*, by Roman Gerus, is an historical fiction series about two years in the Ukrainian War of Independence (1918-19).

Available on the Amazon, Kobo and Barnes & Noble websites in both paperback and e-book formats.





## 2022 Winter Paralympics

by Ihor Stelmach

### Team Ukraine wins seven medals on day one

It is no secret that Ukraine is a Paralympics powerhouse, and, if anyone doubted the statement, proof was evident on day one of the 2022 Winter Paralympics in Beijing. Ukraine jumped out to first place overall among all competing nations when their biathletes captured seven medals, including three gold medals. Taras Rad was first with a silver medal in the 6-kilometer sprint sitting event. Grygorii Vovchynskyi was next with a gold in the 6-kilometer sprint standing competition. The threesome of Vitaly Lukyanenko (gold), Oleksandr Kazik (silver) and Dmytro Suiarko (bronze) swept the 6-kilometer individual visually impaired event. On the women's side, Oksana Shyshkova won gold in the 6-kilometer individual visually impaired race, and Liudmyla Liashenko won the silver medal in the 6-kilometer sprint standing competition.

The third day of competition saw Shyshkova win her second gold medal, this time in the women's cross-country skiing 15-kilometer classic visually impaired event.

Day four was highlighted by Ukraine's utter dominance in biathlon, winning nine additional medals in the sport. Men and women swept the 10-kilometer middle visually impaired event and the women's 10-kilometer middle standing competition, winning all six medals. The medalists were Rad (bronze) in 10-kilometer sitting; Vovchynskyi (silver) in 10-kilometer standing; Lukyanenko

(gold), Anatolii Kovalevskyi (silver), Suiarko (bronze) in the 10-kilometer middle visually impaired event; Iryna Bui (gold), Oleksandra Kononova (silver) and Liashenko (bronze) in the women's 10-kilometer standing event; Shyshkova won a silver medal in the 10-kilometer middle visually impaired competition.

On the fifth day, Ukraine claimed two additional medals in cross-country skiing. Vovchynskyi won a bronze medal in the sprint freestyle standing event and Shyshkova won another medal, a silver, in the women's sprint freestyle visually impaired event.

After five days of competition with four days remaining, Team Ukraine sits second in total medals with 19, and third in gold medal rankings with six. Ukraine has won eight silver and five bronze medals. China (10 gold, 31 total medals) and Canada (seven gold, 16 total medals) rank number one and two, respectively, in the overall medal count.

#### Backlash forces IPC to reverse ruling

The International Paralympic Committee responded to major backlash from many member nations and banned Russian and Belarusian teams from competing in the 2022 Winter Paralympics in Beijing, a complete reversal of their original decision. The IOC faced boycott threats from multiple governing bodies, some of which were contacted by their governments, teams and athletes, stating they would not compete if the Russian and Belarusian were allowed to compete. Latvian and South Korean curling teams said they would not compete against Russia. Other athletes considered leaving Beijing, and the IPC could no longer ignore the situation. The IPC's original decision was to permit Russians and Belarusians to compete under the neutral Paralympic flag.

#### Ukraine's Paralympic Team arrives in Beijing

Braving gunfire and bombings, the Ukrainian Paralympic team arrived safely in Beijing late in the evening on March 3. Ukrainian Paralympic Committee President Valeriy Sushkevych described the arrival as a miracle.

"Not coming here would have been taking the easy option. ... Our presence at the Paralympics is not merely a presence; this is a sign that Ukraine is and will remain a country," Sushkevych told reporters on March 3.

The trip from Ukraine to Beijing took over four full days with several members of the team sleeping on the floor of a bus for two days. Some of the Paralympians were abroad, others were stuck in Ukraine trying to escape missiles before eventually getting out of the country. All of their



Oksana Shyshkova won gold in the women's 6-kilometer visually impaired and in the 15-kilometer classic.

sporting equipment had to be transported from Ukraine. Somehow, all team members and equipment made it to Beijing.

Ukraine's team of 20 athletes and nine guides are competing in biathlon and cross-country skiing, two sports in which they have excelled in the past. A critical issue going forward will be the return of the Ukrainian contingent back to Ukraine given Russia's ongoing unprovoked, premeditated war against their country.

The Ukrainian Paralympic team made their triumphant entrance at the opening ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Paralympics on March 4, as Russia continues its brutal invasion of their home country. Sushkevych admitted it was a "miracle" they were even there, according to report by Reuters.

Five-time Paralympic medalist Maksym Yarovyi was Ukraine's flag bearer, leading the 20-person delegation into the stadium. Many of the team members, draped in their national yellow and blue colors, walked out with fists raised high.

#### Conflicted Masters wins gold

Team U.S.A.'s Ukrainian Oksana Masters opened up the 2022 Winter Paralympics by winning a gold medal in biathlon's women's sprint sitting event. She hit 10 out of

(Continued on page 19)



Vitaly Lukyanenko won gold in the men's 6-kilometer and 10-kilometer biathlon races at the 2022 Paralympic Games in Beijing.

## Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

### Ukrainian athletes appeal to IOC over Russia's war

On February 11 Ukrainian skeleton rider Vladyslav Heraskevych flashed his famous peace sign at the Olympic Games in Beijing. It include the words "No War in Ukraine." A little over two weeks later he was hunkered down some 90 miles outside of Kyiv with weapons in case he needed to defend his country.

"I am a student," the 23-year-old said in a phone interview with the Associated Press. "I am not experienced in these types of things. But I am ready to stand strong and help in any way I can."

While Russian troops were encircling Kyiv, Heraskevych was among some four dozen Ukrainian athletes who sent an open letter to Olympic and Paralympic leaders, asking them to immediately suspend the Russian and Belarusian Olympic and Paralympic Committees.

Their letter said that, "Russia's invasion of Ukraine, supported by Belarus, is a clear breach of the Olympic and Paralympic Charters – a breach that must be met with strong sanctions." The letter said more Ukrainians would have signed, but "it has been a challenge to speak with all athletes from Ukraine as they are seeking safety in bomb shelters."

The advocacy group Global Athlete helped in coordinating the letter, which was also signed by athletes from the U.S., Latvia and the Netherlands, members of the Russian fencing team and the Belarus Sport Solidarity Athletes Federation.

#### IOC move leads to multiple bans of Russia

The fallout from the Russian invasion on Ukraine continued on February 28, when Russian teams were suspended from international soccer, including qualifying matches for the 2022 World Cup. Both world governing soccer body FIFA and European soccer authority UEFA banned Russian national and club teams from competitions until further notice.

A joint statement from FIFA and UEFA said that, "Football is fully united here and in full solidarity with all the people affected in Ukraine."

The news from the soccer world came after the International Olympic Committee influenced dozens of sports governing bodies to exclude Russian athletes and officials from international events. The IOC said such action was needed to "protect the integrity of global sports competitions and for the safety of all the participants."

FIFA's directive barred Russia from the World Cup before a qualifying playoff on March 24. It was a match Poland had already refused to play. UEFA's ruling removed the last remaining Russian club from European competitions this season, taking Spartak Moscow out of the Europa League playoffs.

The Football Union of Russia issued a statement saying it would reserve the right to challenge the decisions against them at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Hockey followed soccer's lead when international and NHL officials also punished Russia. The International Ice Hockey Federation banned Russia and Belarus from competitions at all age levels and moved the 2023 world junior championship out of Siberia. The NHL suspended all business dealings in Russia and ruled out the possibility of holding events there in the near future.

The IOC punished Russian President Vladimir Putin personally, withdrawing the golden Olympic order awarded to him in 2001.

The Olympic body's call also applied to athletes and officials from Belarus, which has assisted Russia's war on Ukraine.

The IOC noted that Ukrainian sports and athletes who have been impacted by the war and who could not, as a result, take part in competitions will take priority over any potential damage done to Russian and Belarusian athletes.

The IOC did not suspend the national Olympic Committees of Russia and Belarus due to short notice for organizational or legal reasons. Thus, as of March 2, they have been permitted to compete as neutral athletes with no national flag, anthem or symbols at the Winter Paralympics in Beijing (The IOC reverse its ruling on March 3. More on the news is below.)

World Rugby suspended Russia and Belarus from all international events and cross-border club rugby. They also suspended the Russian Rugby Union's membership.

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# OUT & ABOUT

March 16-27 Ottawa	Pysanka workshops (children, adults, families), Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, <a href="mailto:pysanka.ottawa@gmail.com">pysanka.ottawa@gmail.com</a>	April 2 New York	Workshop, Ukrainian Easter Traditions (baking), with instruction by Lubow Wolynetz, 212-228-0110 or <a href="http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org">www.ukrainianmuseum.org</a>
March 19 North Port, FL	Taras Shevchenko commemoration St. Andrew Religious and Cultural Center, <a href="mailto:drdanvira@yahoo.com">drdanvira@yahoo.com</a>	April 2 Bethlehem, PA	Lenten retreat, with Fr. Anthony Perkins, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A., St. Francis Center for Renewal, 610-892-7315 or <a href="mailto:nsufler@aol.com">nsufler@aol.com</a>
March 20 Jenkintown, PA	Taras Shevchenko celebration, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, <a href="http://www.ueccphila.org">www.ueccphila.org</a>	April 2, 3, 9, 10 Ottawa	Pysanka workshops (adults and families), Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, <a href="mailto:pysanka.ottawa@gmail.com">pysanka.ottawa@gmail.com</a>
March 20, 26 New York	In-person family workshop, "Pysanky: Ukrainian Easter Eggs," The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org">www.ukrainianmuseum.org</a> or 212-228-0110	April 9 Online	Online pysanka workshop, with instruction by Lesia Lebed and Tania Snihur, The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org">www.ukrainianmuseum.org</a> or 212-228-0110
March 24-27 Palm Beach, FL	Art exhibit at an international art fair, featuring works by Ola Rondiak, John William Gallery, Art Miami, <a href="http://www.johnwilliamgallery.com">www.johnwilliamgallery.com</a>	April 9 New York	In-person pysanka demonstration by Anna Gbur, with film screening of "Pysanka" by Slavko Nowytski, The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org">www.ukrainianmuseum.org</a> or 212-228-0110
March 26, April 2, 9 Chicago	Pysanka workshop, "Reawaken, Revitalize and Create Pysankas," Ukrainian National Museum, <a href="mailto:admin@ukrainiannationalmuseum.org">admin@ukrainiannationalmuseum.org</a> or 312-421-8020	April 9 Jenkintown, PA	Easter Bazaar and Food Fest, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, <a href="http://www.ueccphila.org">www.ueccphila.org</a>
March 26-June 4 New York	Embroidery instructional course, with Lubow Wolynetz, The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org">www.ukrainianmuseum.org</a> or 212-228-0110	<i>Entries in "Out and About" are listed free of charge. Priority is given to events advertised in The Ukrainian Weekly. However, we also welcome submissions from all our readers. Items will be published at the discretion of the editors and as space allows. Please send e-mail to <a href="mailto:mdubas@ukrweekly.com">mdubas@ukrweekly.com</a>.</i>	
March 27, April 3, April 10 New York	In-person Ukrainian Pysanka workshop, with instruction by Lesia Lebed and Tania Snihur, The Ukrainian Museum, <a href="http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org">www.ukrainianmuseum.org</a> or 212-228-0110		

## Ukrainian Pro...

(Continued from page 18)

### Ukrainian athletes condemn IOC, IPC

The Athletes of Ukraine and Global Athlete issued a joint statement on March 2 that condemned the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) ruling that athletes from Russia and Belarus would be allowed to compete at the 2022 Paralympics in Beijing as "neutral" participants. Their statement stressed that, regardless of the "neutral" label, the athletes' presence at the Games will allow Russia and Belarus to use their participation "as state propaganda."

The Athletes of Ukraine further assailed the International Olympic Committee, pointing out the stranglehold the IOC has over the IPC, with both organizations seemingly choosing "politics over principle and Russian interests over athletes' interest."

The IOC originally failed to suspend the Russian and Belarusian National Olympic Committees and the IPC followed suit.

### More sports sanctions against Russia

Many more sports federations followed the International Olympic Committee's appeal and decided to ban Russian athletes from competitions as a result of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine. The IOC formally requested that international sports federations keep Russian athletes out of their organized events. Russia was barred from international competitions in ice skating, skiing, basketball, track and field and some tennis events.

The International Skating Union excluded Russian and Belarusian skaters from the upcoming world figure skating championships. Russian and Belarusian tennis players can play on ATP and WTA tours, but without national flags. Both countries are barred from team competitions, such as the Davis Cup and the Billie Jean King Cup. Russian cross-country skiers were sent home after a three-day standoff with Norwegian ski officials, whose stand forced the Federation of International Skiing to not allow Russians and Belarusians to compete as neutral athletes.

The governing body of track and field enforced a blanket ban on Russia and Belarus, no longer allowing the former to compete as "authorized neutral athletes," which they had been doing since their 2015 suspension for doping violations.

Russia was suspended by the International Basketball Federation, thus eliminating their hope of qualifying for next year's World Cup. The International Volleyball Federation stripped Russia of hosting privileges for the men's world championships in August. Volleyball also suspended Russian teams and clubs from international events.

Gymnastics, curling, rowing, badminton, canoeing and triathlon decided to exclude Russian athletes from all competitions.

Swimming, cycling and auto racing chose not to follow the IOC's recommendation to ban Russians. FINA, swimming's governing body, elected to permit Russian and Belarusian swimmers to participate as "neutrals" under the FINA flag and anthem. FINA did formally withdraw a federation honor awarded to Putin in 2014. Cycling chose to allow Russian riders to compete as neutrals, but will bar Russian and Belarusian teams and sponsors. Auto racing's international body, the FIA, said Russian drivers can compete, but their cars could not display national colors or a Russian flag stripe. The Russian Grand Prix was removed from the calendar earlier.

### Two more athletes join the fight

Ukrainian Olympic medalist Stanislav Horuna has joined the fight against the Russian military. Horuna won a bronze medal in karate last summer at the Tokyo Games. He celebrated his 33rd birthday on March 1, marking the occasion by asking his Instagram followers to support the Ukrainian army with donations in lieu of sending him birthday gifts.

Two weeks after competing at the Beijing Winter Olympics, World and European biathlon champion Dmytro Pidruchnyi is serving in Ukraine's National Guard in his hometown of Ternopil. The three-time Olympian may end up utilizing his sport's shooting skills in the streets fighting off advancing Russian armed soldiers.

*Ihor Stelmach may be reached at [iman@sfgsports.com](mailto:iman@sfgsports.com).*

## 2022 Winter...

(Continued from page 18)

10 targets on the range and crossed the finish line in 20:51.2. Masters is competing in Beijing just six months after winning a gold medal at the Tokyo Paralympics in cycling. Masters continued her winning ways on the second day of the competition, placing second and earning a silver medal in the women's cross-country 15-kilometer sitting event, finishing 32.1 seconds behind China's gold medalist.

Masters wrote a candid, emotional post on Instagram on March 4 in which she described how challenging it has been for her to compete at the Winter Paralympics in Beijing amid Russia's war on Ukraine. The 32-year-old actually expressed guilt about competing in the Games while her home country has come under attack.

"It's been difficult to find my passion and desire to compete at these Games amid the war my home country is enduring," Masters

wrote in the beginning of her post, which came with a photo of herself as a young girl in Ukraine.

"I feel selfish, helpless and guilty for being here," she said. "However, I have always been so proud to be Ukrainian, felt so much pride at the sight of the Ukrainian flag and now more than ever I am the proudest to say I'm Ukrainian. My mom always said my Ukrainian heart made me resilient; it made me a fighter."

"I am reminded how sport has always had the power to unite the world," she said at the start of the Winter Paralympics. She "will be racing for more than just my own goals, more than a spot on the podium," adding that, "every pole stroke, I will be racing for the families and kids in Ukraine with disabilities."

Masters has now won five gold medals (as of March 8) – two in women's Para cross-country skiing from 2018, two in women's Para cycling from Tokyo 2020 and her 2022 biathlon gold in the women's 6-kilometer sitting event.



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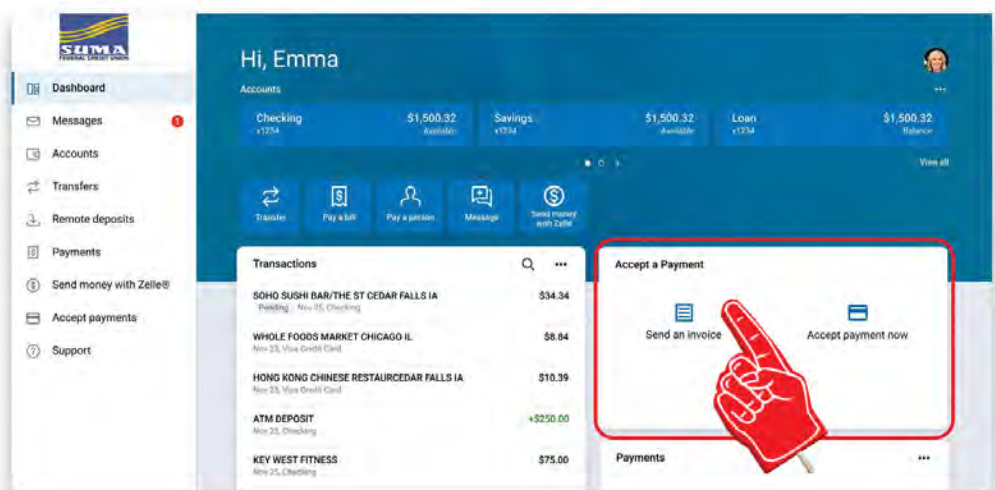
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