Putin’s Declaration of War: “To Protect Russian Citizens”

By: Johnny Bez 25/25 Fine job.

Violence rose to a peak last week during the protests on the Maidan. Death tolls rose to the hundreds per day as pro-Russian snipers killed the children of an independent Ukraine, one shot at a time. The square erupted in flames and the former Ukrainian president, Victor Yanukovich, fled for his life. The Ukrainian demonstrators seized parliament and with the president nowhere to be found, essentially the government of Ukraine. As pro-Ukrainian parliament for the first time, they voted to officially free political enemy and unjustly accused Tymoshenko. They unanimously voted 380:0 to strip Yanukovich of all presidential ranking and issued an arrest warrant for mass murder. Consequently, the current Prime minister will act as president in the interim until the election in December. Two days later, Yanukovich showed up at the airport in Kharkiv, a traditionally Russian dominated city, and tried to leave the country. The Russian Oligarch who owned the airport and was a supporter of Yanukovich in 2004 surprisingly denied Yanukovich access to the plane, forcing the dictator and his twenty armed guards to leave via car.

On Thursday February 28th, Yanukovich was spotted in Moscow where he made a bombastic and absurd statement declaring that he is still the legitimate ruler of Ukraine. Team Russia began their advance. Beginning Thursday night the Russians and Tartars living within Ukraine started an uprising of their own to retake a portion of Crimea. Friday, Putin stationed the Russian military on the border between the two countries and performed military exercises to insight fear within the Ukrainian people. Putin is not ready to give up Ukraine.

Just as the Ukrainian people feared, the end of the Sochi Olympics marked the beginning of a revitalized, agressive Putin, who can now concentrate his focus on Ukraine. As of Saturday night March 1 2014, the Russian military invaded Ukraine and took control of the parliament, airports, and highways within the area of Crimea and now Odessa on the coast of the Black Sea. Cities within the east that contain a large percentage of Russians such as Donetsk are also starting to bubble with protests , this time from the mouths of Russians as they march hosting the white, blue, and red flag of oppression. No violence has erupted between the Russian military and Ukrainian people, yet. What is stopping the Russians from pushing farther and annexing the eastern part of Ukraine for Russia? Only time will answer that question for the Ukrainian people as they wait with hands clenched in sweaty anticipation.

 Unfortunately, Ukraine is economically dependent on Russia. According to the *New York Times*, 30 percent of trade is with Russia. The majority of Ukraine’s oil and natural gas comes from Russia. Economic sanctions imposed on Ukraine by Putin will surely cause the hryvnia and economy to tank. In solid countenance, it is a risk the Ukrainian people not only fully comprehend, but are willing to make.

As for military action, Ukraine’s Security Council decided to put the Ukrainian military on highest alert. According to CNBC, the Defense Ministry was ordered to conduct the call-up, potentially of all men up to 40 in Ukraine, which still has universal male conscription. As of late Sunday night, Russia has total control of the Crimean peninsula with 6,000 air and ground forces occupying. The Russian soldiers surrounded the few small Ukrainian bases, preventing the Ukrainian soldiers from leaving and disarming the men. According to CNN, the Russian soldiers are denying food and water from entering the Ukrainian bases, starving the soldiers out like animals. "This is a red alert. This is not a threat. This is actually a declaration of war to my country," Ukrainian interim Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said.

Fortunately, Ukraine still has a few cards up its embroidered sleeve, holding leverage on Russia without the use of force. John Kerry threatened Russia with sanctions and other economic consequences if they did not back down from their military expansion into Ukraine. On Friday the ruble plummeted and is not on the rise. Furthermore, Ukraine is the access point for Russia’s oil pipelines to the Western markets. Ukraine physically, is the medium that connects Russia to Western civilization. Since our current capitalistic society runs on money, it is important to note that the United States pledged 1 billion and the EU, as of Wednesday March 5th, pledged 15 billion over two years to help stabilize the country.

Putin began his invasion of Odessa under the declaration of protecting the Russian people within Ukraine. The American observer must ask, why didn’t the Russians begin to protest during or before the Olympics? During the Olympics, Putin didn’t have the time to ship scores of people from Russia to protest in Ukraine and stir up the country. Putin invited all nations to come and observe the Russian people to show that they are eager for Putin to protect them. Apparently it was an empty promise, on Wednesday according to CNN the UN envoy Serry was kidnapped by 10 to 15 Russian soldiers and was held captive inside a café in Crimea. What happened to the open invitation Putin? And what don’t you want the UN envoy to see in Crimea and report back to the UN?

Putin wants to restore the menacing Cold War Russian reputation back to his country. By invading Ukraine he sends a message to the world: don’t mess with Russia, especially when dealing in the East. Cunning and intelligent, Putin is less egomaniacal than people believe. This invasion of Ukraine is simply his next power play on the world stage. As a Ukrainian deeply enraged and passionate about the freedom of our country, I can do nothing but *hope* that Putin’s soldiers will not march past Odessa and *pray* that this is truly just a power play. Ukraine has been fighting for its independence from Russia for thousands of years. With the world as its witness, Ukraine has nibbled on the perogi of freedom in 2004 but has now returned to devour the whole meal.