

# Stand with Ukraine and its Heroes

By Don Sutherland

February 24, 2022 has joined its place in world history with September 1, 1939. It is a pivotal moment in history. Russia launched an unprovoked and premeditated invasion of Ukraine aimed at toppling its democratic government, suffocating its democracy, and subjugating the free will of its people.

The Kremlin underestimated the response of the Ukrainian leadership and people. It did not count on embattled President Volodymyr Zelensky to put his life on the line. Moscow's insults reveal its thinking that he would take flight much as the cowardly Ashraf Ghani had done in abandoning Afghanistan and its people to the Taliban. It did not count on a whole people to become real-life heroes of mythical proportions in defending their nation, culture, and families. It did not count on much of the world's joining together to oppose its naked aggression. These are monumental blunders.

President Putin overreached. He likely launched his invasion expecting little of consequence from the United States and Europe. He counted on American internal division—division brought about by pro-Putin mouthpieces such as Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, Tucker Carlson, among other disgraced and disgraceful individuals—to paralyze a coherent American response and hobble the American capacity to rally Europe and others against Russian aggression. That was another monumental miscalculation.

Much bitter fighting lies ahead. Many innocent people will lose their lives. But there are no circumstances under which the world will accept Russia's subjugation of Ukraine. Pre-20th century Czarist expansionism is intolerable in the 21st century.

In the wake of the conflict, there will be no return to the status quo ante. It is increasingly likely that Russia will wind up a diminished geopolitical actor. For some time, President Putin will have transformed Russia into a vast prison, locked out by much of the world from economic and cultural opportunities. Its people, a growing number of whom appear to oppose the war, will yearn for new leadership. The case for rapidly incorporating Ukraine into the European Union and NATO will have become unequivocal. The post-war regional and global changes could be more profound and consequential than anything that has been witnessed perhaps since Westphalia in 1648 gave birth to the modern concept of the nation-state. Nuclear saber-rattling by President Putin will not permit Russia to escape the predicament Putin inflicted on it.

In the days, weeks, perhaps months or longer ahead, the world should continue to stand with Ukraine and its people. It should provide the military supplies and humanitarian support Ukraine needs. Ukraine must be given whatever it needs to prevail in this war. It should welcome all Ukrainian refugees with open arms.

Following the war, the world should stand ready to provide a robust reconstruction package to rebuild Ukraine's infrastructure and economy. It should grant Ukraine free trade. It should open the door to Ukraine's gaining expedited membership in the European Union and NATO. It should also avoid the errors of Versailles following the conclusion of World War I and be ready

to be generous to a post-Putin Russia so that Russia never again has a Putin at the head of its government.