



PROBUS Club of Central Edmonton Newsletter

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January 17 - David Marples

David Marples, research Fellow in the Contemporary Ukraine Studies Program of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, helped us understand what is happening in Ukraine.

Current issues starting with an uprising in the Ukraine in 2013 which resulted in installation of government which was friendly to the west. Then Russia annexed Crimea and installed pro-Russian governments in two eastern regions. One underlying challenge in eastern regions, are the large number of Russian speaking people in the major population centers. There were some military success for Russia in 2014 and 2015, also the Minsk Accords were established in 2014, these included steps for the areas dominated by Russian speaking people to leave Ukraine.

In 2019, the Zelensky was elected as president. Zelensky stated that he believed that Ukraine should remain whole. Zelensky government's ability to retain a whole Ukraine were negatively impacted by the Minsk Accords. Other steps taken by Zelensky included:

- Nationization of Russian Orthodox Church which resulted in the first Ukrainian language services in its last Christmas services held in the major Russian Orthodox cathedral
- The arrest of pro-Russian leaders such as Viktor Medvedchuk

In early 2022, Russia (read Putin) made several claims against the West. E.G. no expansion of NATO (1990), military build in Baltic States and Poland, military trainers in Ukraine, and alleging that NATO was behind the 2014 protest that removed Yanukovich.

Along with these claims Russia demanded that:

- Ban on Ukraine entering NATO
- No NATO military exercises in Ukraine without Russia's permission
- Removal of NATO membership for states bordering Russia
- Removal of heavy weapons from these states
- Legal guarantees of Russia's security

David speculated that the reason for these demands were Russia's desire to get the West to the table for negotiations, resolve problems with collapse of USSR and Russian retreat, and Putin's legacy and his questionable psychological state as well as his imperialism.

This round of Russia's aggression started in Nov 2021 with the massing of troops on eastern border of Ukraine. This included a buildup of weapons such as tanks and missiles. Also, Russia started a social media campaign against Ukraine. After further steps, Russia began its invasion on February 24, 2022.

As the war unfolded, Russia focused on expansion of Donetsk and Luhansk (Eastern regions). It began its campaign of terror by reducing cities to rubble, capturing steelworks, invasion of Kherson and capture of a major city. In the start, Ukraine struggled because the supplies from the west took time to get to it and to get staff trained to use it. Russia's advance faltered, its failures included:

- Underestimation of Ukrainian resistance
- Use of raw recruits
- Poorly supplied tanks, no fuel, expended along road to Kyiv
- Did not capture Ukrainian government (Zelensky)
- Using prisoners and mercenaries leading to atrocities which bolstered resistance.

Ukrainian Counterattacks taking back land from Russia, freeing Cities. However, this led to missile attack and widespread destruction. Russia employed the Wagner Group, which had some success, but committed great atrocities. Some realities:

- Russian economy is doing well, it is a petro state
- By GDP and economy is a medium power
- United democratic world against invasion.
- Countries are now seeking to join NATO (Finland and Sweden)
- United Ukrainians against invasion
- While sanctions against Russia are severe, they are not crippling the economy
- Putin seem to be ruled by emotions.

Will war result in nuclear war, this is unclear? Russia has alluded to it as an option. A number of important countries have come out against it, including China.

What will be the results? Amongst many alternative shared with us, here are a few:

- Ukraine becomes part of Russia; guerrilla war will be likely.
- Putin loses power, but maybe someone worse takes over.
- Further breakup of Russia.

What we do know, is that if and when this ends, an enormous amount of effort and money will be needed to rebuild Ukraine. Depending on the result, the many Ukrainians who fled will or will not return. What was not touched on was the impact of this action by Russia on the greater world stage. We thank David for his fascinating and unnerving presentation.

January 25 Tour:

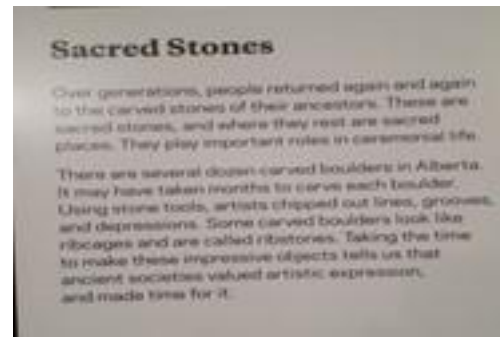
About 12 members gathered at the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) for a self guided tour including a guest from Beaumont. People went together to the Reimaging the Drive exhibit but then pursued their own interests to explore other parts of the museum -- e.g., Human History, Natural History and Bug Gallery. I was unable to join, fortunately Mel kindly supplied picture. I share few with you below. But first, some information about RAM drawn from its website:

- The RAM is the largest museum in western Canada and one of the top museums in Canada. Located in the Arts District in downtown Edmonton, they collect, preserve, research, interpret, and exhibit objects and specimens related to the heritage of Alberta's people and natural environment. The museum's expansive permanent galleries feature engaging exhibits complemented by internationally touring features.
- It first opened to the public on December 7, 1967, and soon became an important destination for Albertans. In 2005, we were renamed the Royal Alberta Museum in honour of Queen Elizabeth II, who visited Alberta that spring. In 2018, it moved into new 419,000 square foot facility in downtown Edmonton.
- Each of the more than five million objects in its collections not only has a history, but a story. It is passionate about collecting and conducting research that helps you discover why Alberta is remarkable. The work of its researchers and scientists supports the exhibitions, outreach, and learning programs at RAM.



RAM exterior

The following pictures are taken from the collection Mel sent me. They provide an impression of the range of displays in RAM.





As noted, I could not make it, but it remains on my bucket list. It is a true treasure.

Have a Great month – stay well