

April 22, 2014



## **His Excellency Georgiy Mamedov**

Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Canada

## **RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND CRIMEA: THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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**Chairman: Noble Chummar**

President, The Empire Club of Canada

### **Head Table Guests**

Dr. Gordon K. McIvor, Executive Director, National Executive Forum on Public Property, and 3rd Vice-President, The Empire Club of Canada; Treena Watson, MA Candidate, European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto; Captain Canon Don Aitchison, Chaplain, Trinity College School; Vladimir Pavlov, Consul General, Russian Federation in Toronto; The Rt. Hon. Adrienne Louise Clarkson, 26th Governor General of Canada; James Baskin, Chairman and CEO, Pragmatic Conferencing, and 4th Vice-President, The Empire Club of Canada; Robert Fotheringham, Chair, Cerba Toronto, and Founding Partner, Fotheringham and Fang; and Bob Ramsay, Founder, Ramsay Inc.

### **Introduction by Noble Chummar**

Madam Clarkson, Ambassador Mamedov, past presidents, members and guests, today's speech is about sovereignty.

How could I possibly reflect the obvious angst and concern that people in this

room and quite literally around the world have with the country that today's speaker represents. The world is angry, frustrated, anxious and sad.

I could start with the events of the past few months. I could speak of the international outrage expressed by global superpowers resulting in the relocation of the G8 or is it the G7 meeting this June. I could start with a quote from Leo Tolstoy or Anton Chekov, but nothing I say could genuinely express the sentiment in this meeting or in legislatures and parliaments around the world. Just this morning, U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden gave Russia a stern and direct warning to comply with the terms of the Geneva Accord.

Mr. Ambassador, having lived in Ottawa for over a decade, you know Canada and Canadians. You know that we are a peaceful nation with an enormous influence on global human behaviour. We are proud of our diversity and protective of our citizenship and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Ambassador, I need not tell you that, in light of what is happening in the world today, your address to the Empire Club and to the thousands of people who are watching is courageous to say the least. Thank you for offering your country's perspective to this club today. The Empire Club offers a podium of free speech, and although many may not agree with what you have to say today, you are our guest and you are most welcome here, sir.

Russia has had an enormous influence on the world, as we know it, through art, culture, science and politics. Most of these great gifts to the modern world have been highlighted and celebrated at the recent Olympic Games in Sochi. For two weeks this winter, the entire world celebrated all things Russian. Classical music, literature, ballet, scientific advancements, caviar and vodka! The first words in space were uttered in the Russian language by Yuri Gagarin. "How beautiful is this planet—let us preserve it—not destroy it."

Ladies and gentlemen, we are honoured to have Her Excellency, the Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson, 26th Governor General of Canada, here today. Her Excellency represented Canada around the world and had the honour of receiving Ambassador Mamedov when he presented her his credentials to the government of Canada in 2003.

The Empire Club of Canada is pleased to provide its members and guests an opportunity to hear from today's speaker, His Excellency Georgiy Mamedov, Russian Federation Ambassador to Canada. Mr. Mamedov is the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps—meaning he is the longest-serving foreign ambassador in Canada.

Dr. Mamedov graduated from Moscow State Institute of International Relations and holds a PhD in History. He has been in the Russian diplomatic service since 1972. In that time, the Ambassador has served his country in the United States and is

widely regarded as one of Russia's experts on the United States and Canada. Prior to his appointment as the Russian Federation's Ambassador to Canada, Dr. Mamedov was Russia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Mamedov was one of Russia's key envoys for diplomatic discussions with the White House, the United Nations and NATO.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Georgiy Mamedov.

### **Georgiy Mamedov**

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. It's almost like a homecoming, because I remember I made a presentation several years ago. I was told I have 20 minutes to blow everything apart, to take the barn down, and then to field provocative questions. I will try to accommodate you, but before that I want to say a few words.

It's my eleventh year in Canada. I am a happy man here. I'm proud of what I have been able to achieve together with Canadians over these 11 years. First, the Arctic Treaty Search and Rescue was signed, thanks to the initiative of Canadian and Russian military people. It's a plus for the Arctic Nations. It was mentioned by our host that the pinnacle of our cooperation was assuring security for the Olympics. You remember the terrible prognosis about terrorism, lack of human rights and people suggesting one shouldn't go to Sochi. Now, I hope we can share in the success. I was never so deeply involved in your Special Services. I hope somebody in this room represents them, and I want to hail them and salute them for the cooperation they provided us in keeping both your and our sportsmen, and everybody else safe and secure.

You'll appreciate the importance of the G20 Group, which was launched by your former prime minister, Mr. Martin. He gave us a lot of advice on how to organize the G20 group last year in St. Petersburg. Recently, just a couple of months ago, the G20 met again. It was actually working on what we agreed on in St. Petersburg. The important part of this agreement was the consensus between Canadian economists and Russian economists. I

want to pay tribute, especially, to your late Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, who made a tremendous contribution to the success of the G20 in St. Petersburg. I hope there will be an equally successful one in Australia. We did a lot over these years. The most important part, of course, was to know Canadians.

I was very happy to hear our host reiterate that you are a peaceful people and that you care about the world, because I know it. I live here. Whenever we have some free time, my wife and I do not go to the casino to risk my pittance of a salary, but rather we go to Perth, to Merrickville, to other little towns, which remind me so very much of Russia and Europe in general. There is certainly a connection and, of course, it's the people.

For me, it's also a homecoming of sorts because of the presence of Her Excellency. I was privileged that when I became Ambassador here, my first assignment was to accompany Her Excellency on a trip to Russia and the North. I was never in the north of Russia myself. It was an eye opener. The most brilliant speech I ever heard on what we people of the North have together was from Her Excellency at the Institute of Mining in St. Petersburg. It should be written in golden letters in the annals of Russian-Canadian history.

I was also very happy to present Russian State decorations to such outstanding Canadians as Her Excellency, Monsieur Chrétien, and some others. There is a bond. Now when we are in a rough patch in our relations, I feel very sorry and I believe I owe it to you to explain our position, but not in propaganda terms. I am an old man. I will soon retire and return to the academic community, so I don't stand to risk much. I, frankly, must speak my own mind. I don't need any instructions. I didn't receive many when I was ambassador here. I don't think it's time to start now.

I think I owe it to you, my friends, Canadians, to explain certain things from our perspective, to give our side of the story. You know this famous saying, "There are three sides to the stories: mine, yours and fairness." I will try and give mine in 20 minutes

and then let you tear me apart. I'm quite happy, because deep inside you really want to find out and to know. You want everything to come to a happy conclusion and the Ukrainian people to live happily in sovereignty, be one country, and deserve the freedoms that they were fighting for, for such a long period of time.

I will start with history, because I am an historian by profession, not that much of a diplomat. History always hurt me when I had negotiations with my American counterparts, with my Latin-American counterparts, with my European counterparts, with my Canadian counterparts, because I'm an old man and I remember how it was and how positions of different governments change. I'm not a public relations man who can say one thing today and then run from it tomorrow. It will continue to haunt and hunt me and will find me eventually.

The first question that was asked of me, or rather I was rebuked about when I arrived in Canada was, "How can you represent the great culture of Russia, land of the North, of Gagarin and Tolstoy, and be on the wrong side of history in Iraq?" My answer was, "I believe it's a tragic mistake that my American friends made and we must all try and do something about that." I was always trying to give a certain amount of face-saving for people who made mistakes. I hoped that the Cold War suspicions and legacy were behind us. Unfortunately, I have proved to be wrong lately.

My appeal to you is if you want to find whether you're on the right or the wrong side of history, try to learn the history first. Then you will learn simple things such as that Russia, as an entity, was launched in Kiev 2,000 years ago, not in Paris, not in London, not anywhere else. This is where the so-called rouse started. Also, you would understand that the Russian Black Sea Fleet was not introduced by Putin several months ago, but has been in Crimea for 300 years. You will also know that my country lost 30 million lives, the population approximately of Canada, fighting fascism and, by the way, helping the Ukrainians

against fascism 70 years ago. After the Second World War, two cities were proclaimed heroes. There was Stalingrad, that you all know, and Sevastopol, that you probably learned about lately. The blood that soaks the land of Crimea is shared by our people. It's a bond that you can't easily ignore.

What is the current situation in Ukraine? First of all, it's a tragedy. It's a tragedy because for many years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was hard for the Ukrainian people to establish the kind of government that they deserve. It was equally hard for Russians. Such great changes like the collapse of a nation state with ideology, economy, social programs, everything, doesn't go easily. I remember in 1993, when I was heading to an important delegation to negotiate nuclear arms with the Americans. I was driving to the airport from downtown Moscow. It was tense. It was tense rolling down the streets of Moscow in 1993, with shooting in the Parliament where Communists constituted the majority. I remember how Canadians, Americans and other world partners universally supported this move, which wasn't exactly a legitimate parliamentary struggle. I know that such huge changes are dramatic and revolutions are messy.

We call what happened in Kiev, in February, a coup; others call it a revolution. As an historian, I know there is very little difference. Some people call the October 1917 revolution a coup. Some historians call it a revolution. By the way, I think your timing for this speech was perfect because, as an historian, I want to remind you that on April 22, the greatest Bolshevik revolutionary, Vladimir Lenin, was born. It's interesting historic irony that I address you on his birthday at the Empire Club, because one of his most cherished plans was to take apart the Russian Empire and all the other empires.

Revolutions are messy. After the 1917 revolution, the Bolsheviks took power, some say during the coup and others say during the revolution in St. Petersburg. There were also three more governments, which simultaneously appeared in Russia. One

in Kiev, which was occupied by Germans and supported by the German Army. Another government in Crimea, a government, which was led by Czarist generals, supported by the French and the Brits, who have always been very interested in relations with Russia and Crimea since the Crimean War. The third government was in the Far East where the Japanese helped another Czarist general to create a government. There were four governments at the same time.

You can't expect revolutions or coups or whatever not to be messy. Unfortunately, as my old friend and former Director of Central Intelligence, Bob Gates, used to say, it is during revolutions that the most ruthless and organized take power. This is exactly what happened, in our estimation, in Kiev. What started as an anti-corruption revolution was hijacked by nationalists with a very Russophobic agenda.

The first move was to ban the Russian language. The second move was to fire the constitutional court. Right now whether you like it or not, there's only one legitimate President in Ukraine according to the Ukrainian constitution— Mr. Yanukovich.

According to the Ukrainian constitution, there are only three ways of disposing your legitimate president. One, he writes his own abdication, which I don't suppose Mr. Yanukovich wants to do. Number two—there is an impeachment. Number three—he dies. That, unfortunately, was very close. He was shot at. He had to run for his life initially to the regions where he believed he would be welcomed. He was afraid. He saw what happened to Mr. Gaddafi and others. He didn't want to follow suit with his family. His main aide wasn't prosecuted or anything else. He was shot in Kiev when he was naïve enough to wait for some clearance. He was shot. Mr. Yanukovich was equally afraid of that.

Theoretically, there is only one legitimate guy there. The rest from the standpoint of the Ukrainian constitution, are just guys who took power. It happened in Russia, 1917. It happened in the United States many years ago and elsewhere. It happens, but it's

messy. Immediately, when this new authority took control, its first move scared the daylights out of the part of Ukraine where people speak the Russian language and have traditional ties with Russia. The main slogan was, and I remember the headlines in local newspapers, that finally Putin and Russia lost. We have all our guys in Kiev. They will be part of NATO and so on and so forth. Actions followed. Actions, of course, speak louder than words. The Russian language was banned. Later, Russian TV and radio were banned. It's difficult for young Russian males, ages from 16 to 60, to enter Ukraine. Other things happened as well and there was another revolution in Crimea.

Crimea was always considered to be a part of Russia, historically. Why did Khrushchev give it away in 1954? I haven't heard anybody here discuss it. Why did he do it? Because it was one country, the Soviet Union. He was a Communist leader. He gave it to the Communist leader in Ukraine. What was the reason? The reason, unfortunately, was a very murky one. Stalin died in 1953. You know what a terrible monster Stalin was. I know it personally because he shot my grandfather. Of course, my grandfather was an innocent man and was a hero of the Second World War, but those were the terrible purges that were conducted by Stalin.

One of the people, who was closest to Stalin, who was in charge of his purges, killing hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine, was Khrushchev. It's not just gossip. There are documents in archives that are signed personally by Khrushchev sending people to firing squads. To try to distance himself when many people were being killed and purged after Stalin died, he decided to make a gesture. He didn't give a damn about the history of Crimea. He was dealing these people as if they were serfs, giving them from one baron to another because they were inside one Communist country.

In 1991, for all reasonable people, it was obvious that if the Soviet Union was to fall apart, Crimea should remain, of course, with Russia. President Yeltsin was involved in a bitter power

struggle with Gorbachev, who tried to retain the Soviet Union. Yeltsin, of course, wanted to tear it apart—to take Russia out of the Soviet Union.

When the question of Crimea was raised between party boss Yeltsin, since he was a party boss in Moscow and head of the Communists of Russia, and the party boss of Ukraine, Yeltsin didn't give a damn about Crimea. He wanted to have all these regional party bosses on his side so that he could defeat Gorbachev, which he did eventually. Again people were given away like serfs.

When these revolutions or coups started in Kiev and we had the new version of Bolsheviks there, with very nationalistic, anti-Russian attitudes, people in Crimea thought, "Why can't we do the same?" They did. Yes, there was the Russian Fleet there. I will tell you what was there. There were 20,000 Russian troops in Crimea.

There were 20,000 Russian troops with the Black Sea Fleet. There were 20,000 Ukrainian troops there. Now, out of these 20,000 Ukrainian troops, only 3,000 decided to go back to Ukraine. The rest are serving with the Russian Army, which tells you something. It was not only that, but you remember during the bloodshed in Kiev during the coup, the Berkut Special Forces were involved, Special Ukrainian Forces, not Special Russian Forces. Of course, they were immediately disbanded after the new authorities took power. Many of them have families and they went back to Crimea. We didn't need to have any additional troops crossing the border from Ukraine to Crimea. We already had our troops there and the Ukrainian troops were quite prepared for the independence of Crimea, because they lived there and 80 per cent of them were Russians.

What happens now in Crimea? Not a single person was killed; no purges. The first thing that we did was to rehabilitate the Tatar ethnic community almost like you did here with First Nations. We provided them with greater representation.

These people now believe they have come back home. Leo Tolstoy was mentioned here, but Leo Tolstoy didn't only write "War and Peace." Leo Tolstoy was also a war correspondent in Sevastopol during the Crimean War. If you want to learn about the close ties—historical, psychological and otherwise between the Russians in Crimea and Russians elsewhere—read Tolstoy. Don't listen to me. Don't trust me, or Harper, or Putin; read Leo Tolstoy. People like him don't lie. You will understand these close ties and why people are so happy to be back in Russia.

Now to Ukraine. What do we want in Ukraine? We want a united Ukraine. We don't want a divided Ukraine. Out of 150 million people who populate Russia, 25 million are Ukrainians. You have a million and a half here; people who are very energetic, outspoken and so on and so forth. Imagine when you have 25 million. It's quite an interesting community, with divided families and otherwise. Another three million Ukrainians every year work in Russia. They sent back home last year something like \$20 billion. It's not a pittance if you take the sad state of the Ukrainian economy right now. There are numerous ties.

When you speak about air space, when you speak about my favourite military industrial complex, we still have ties. We are very interested in stability in Ukraine. There is a lot of talk about Russian troops on the border of Ukraine. Of course we are concerned, because Ukraine is on the brink of civil war. Will we use them? I can give you my personal assurances. Troops won't cross the Ukrainian border. It's the last thing we want. It would be a disaster not only for the people, who feel deeply about Ukraine, but a total disaster for Russia.

What are those troops doing? They are preventing all these extremists from taking vengeance on people who speak and act Russian. You may say it's a lot of fairy tales. Let's put it to the proof. That's why it was Russia, not the United States, not the European Union, not even my favourite Canada, that was behind organizing the Geneva meeting on April 17. There was a broad

agreement there that we must stop violence, that we must disarm these extremist groups, that there must be effective constitutional reform, so people in Eastern Ukraine will feel equally empowered.

In Western Ukraine, my host mentioned Joe Biden. I happen to know Joe Biden very well. He's a very interesting guy. Before he was in charge of Iraq. Then he was in charge of Afghanistan. Now he's in charge of Ukraine. God bless him. I know him very well. He's a nice guy.

In his speech he castigated Russia, which is to be expected. We also castigated the Americans. He also said that we need real constitutional changes in Ukraine. We need more autonomy for Eastern Ukraine so that the people feel secure and can participate in forthcoming presidential elections. We want nothing better than to have a publicly elected, legitimate new president for Ukraine, with whom we can resume discussions.

This is what we want. It will be hard. There's huge suspicion. People are fanning up anti-Russian hysteria. Stereotypes are still very much alive. I know it. We also have our lunatic fringe, our tea party in Moscow and elsewhere. Whenever I had to conclude important arms control negotiations with the Americans, my chief opposition wasn't the American Military. It wasn't stupid enough to wage nuclear war with Russia. It was many people of certain Cold War upbringings back in Moscow. I had to convince them. I remember when we had hearings and ratifications of these treaties. I was publicly accused of treason and everything on the floor of my Parliament. I'm used to this stuff. I have been through difficult patches.

I only want us to work in concert to help the Ukrainian people finally get the government they deserve, because I'm absolutely convinced it's in the national interest, not only of Canada, the United States, Europe, but also of Russia. We want Ukraine to be on equally friendly terms with the West and with Russia not make this stupid choice between being friendly to Russia or being friendly to the West. I think it's hugely artificial and destructive

to impose this choice on Ukrainians.

When I was last summoned by my friends in Foreign Affairs, I told them if you want to be serious players, if you want to help Ukrainians, if you want to be instrumental in national reconciliation in Ukraine, join the group. Be with us. Americans, Europeans, yes, we argue, but we're trying to do something. It's much harder than just standing on the sidelines and bad-mouthing everybody. It's deeply offensive to people who lost 30 million lives to be compared to Hitler or Germany. I will leave it to the conscience of those who make such terrible pronouncements.

I'm an eternal optimist, probably because I presided over the Cold War negotiations with the Americans over nuclear arms when we were really close to the brink on numerous occasions. I'm absolutely certain that common sense will prevail, that we'll cut through this hysteria and suspicion and that together we'll help the Ukrainians come together, live happily, be independent and not be concerned about Russian intervention or about Western imposition of certain people in government, whatever is the case.

The only thing I want is to return to normality. Yes, there will be disagreements. I won't be able to convert you, but I was trying to give you an historic viewpoint, from the standpoint of a guy who's been around for much more difficult patches. There won't be a Cold War. There won't be a Hot War. Russian troops won't cross the border of Ukraine, but we will have to come to some important agreements to help Ukrainians determine their own future.

Thank you very much.

The appreciation of the meeting was expressed by Dr. Gordon K. McIvor, Executive Director, National Executive Forum on Public Property, and 3rd Vice-President, The Empire Club of Canada.