

The Orange Revolution and EuroMaidan

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

In 2004 Peter Goldring spoke to a crowd estimated at half a million people gathered in Kyiv's Independence Square, the only Canadian Member of Parliament in Ukraine, for the Orange Revolution. In November 2013 crowds again returned to Independence Square, now dubbed the Euromaidan, once again calling for democracy for Ukraine. Peter Goldring was there.

For the second time in 10 years, the people of Ukraine have risen up en masse against the very same despotic ruler, Viktor Yanukovich, and the very same interfering Russian leader, Vladimir Putin. The cast of characters remains the same as do their actions: the same corruption, the same Soviet-style thuggery and the same Russian leader pulling the strings of his puppet Yanukovich. During the 2004 election campaign Yanukovich's thugs assaulted and intimidated voters, he brazenly cheated to win election.

In that campaign I observed and photographed ballot boxes being stuffed. Immediately after that corrupted election in November 2004, I stayed on and witnessed the Orange Revolution, as young and old, senior citizens and children stood together all hours of the day and night as sentinels of resolve for their democratic rights and calling for their vote, which had been stolen by corruption, to be returned.

The well-disciplined crowd in Independence Square grew to the hundreds of thousands, their mood one of cautious determination. As they gathered reports came in that troops had been summoned to Kyiv and were waiting in many, many buses at the outskirts of the city, waiting for the signal to move in.

I was in Independence Square every day and night, throughout that volatile period when anything and everything might happen, and really could have. The



Mr. Goldring spoke on the stage to 400,000 people with a message of support "this day and always" to democratically and peacefully put forth your demands that your desired destiny be fulfilled.



despot Yanukovych is from the old Soviet Russian school, where there is little regards for rights, freedoms, elections, or dissent.

Even those who gave support or encouragement such as myself came under scrutiny, with secret service everywhere. Phone calls were being tapped and cut off. The carpet in my hotel room had a puddle of blood beside the telephone table, which I stepped in in my bare feet as I worked the phone. Obviously it was intended to shock me. There was fruit and wine delivered to my room without any indication as to who or where it was from. I did not mention the blood to others; I cleaned it up so that I would not be removed from the country by the government for my safety. I ate all the fruit and drank a little of the wine to show them their intimidation wasn't working. The wine wasn't very good. I then reported on that phone back to Canada day and night, the lone Canadian voice reporting on the situation as most of the Canadian media had left immediately after the election and there were no other Canadian MPs in Ukraine.

I also was asked to speak on the stage at Independence Square, to an estimated 500,000 people. What I told them was that Canada was with them as they stood up for

their rights and freedoms and demanded that their vote – their voices be heard. Their responses came back after interpretation in absolutely incredible waves of sound.

While I was in my room deciding whether to leave for Canada or extend my stay again, I heard explosions. I looked out my window in the general direction of Independence Square and behind the building where the square should be,

there were clouds of smoke; my heart sank, I was sure the military had moved in. Then more explosions, but this time I saw fireworks soaring through the clouds of billowing smoke. I realized they must have settled the issue. Later, I learned that a repeat election had been agreed to. I could go home that night. I returned again to Ukraine for

the repeat elections in December 2004, and for every election since.

Now less than 10 years later in the same Independence Square, the Maidan, many hundreds of thousands, a million on one Sunday in December alone, were again gathered to peacefully demonstrate, to protest against the very same despotic ruler, Viktor Yanukovych.



Mr. Goldring believes that the people of Ukraine wish that they engage as an independent country economically and civilly, not just with the east, not just with the West, but with the world as a nation of the world.



He learned from his ouster in 2004, when he was caught rigging the election. He more subtly westernized his campaign, learned how to cheat less visibly and took advantage of the discord between Julia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko. He ran a better campaign visibly and told people anything that they wanted to hear. He presented a more moderate direction than in the past, with encouragement of working towards integration with the European Union. He sold himself as ‘the changed man’. Some believed him, encouraged him; he was elected President in an election that was decreed to be acceptable by the international community in 2010 with a majority government to do as he liked.

It didn’t take too long to consolidate virtually dictatorial power.

Even though the Verkhovna Rada has a recorded electronic voting system, he had the constitutional limits on presidential power amended by a simple majority show of hands, a vote tarnished by reports that some parliamentarians held up two hands, both of which were counted. With that power Yanukovich then completely reversed his electoral promises to work more moderately with the European Union to modernize and remove rampant corruption from the politics and industry of Ukraine.

In spite of the knowledge that Ukraine has extensive resources of natural gas, he used the lack of and expense of gas to cut a deal with Russia’s Putin, on the condition that Ukraine join in an economic trade pact Soviet Union-style with Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and others. This brought out thousands of Ukrainians rising up to protest across Ukraine, with many Ukrainians gathering in Kyiv’s Independence Square, dubbed Euromaidan.



Mr. Goldring believes that as citizens of a great country, Ukrainians have a fantastic future, if unfettered by external influences, and have many friends around the world standing with them on this journey.

This could have been it. President Yanukovich at the time had options. He could have revised some policies to satisfy some protestors to disperse the crowds. Or, alternatively, he could just have waited the demonstrators out. Some say that by the end of November the demonstrators were on the verge of dispersing by themselves.

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Yanukovich’s response was predictable: old Soviet-style, anti-protestor, anti-democratic, send in the storm troopers, thugs who broke a few skulls, spilling blood and putting dozens in the hospital. Afterward some people identified by Yanukovich as “problems” disappeared completely.

The result was a massive escalation of the number of people in the Euromaidan. Many

were former Afghanistan war veterans who came out in great numbers to protect and support their children, the youth of Ukraine who had suffered at the hands of the thugs.

On December 10th, in the House of Commons in Ottawa the concern was great and a “take note” debate was called for and conducted over several hours. I followed the debate closely but was concerned that it did not fully explain what was transpiring, I decided to go to Ukraine, to see for myself, entirely at my own cost I might add.

Once again, I found myself in the middle of what is believed to be yet another revolution.

I detail more extensively in Issue #177. What I determined by being on the ground at Euromaidan in Kyiv was worth the trip. Russian-speaking, Ukrainian-speaking, Tatars coming together for a common cause, their democratic rights. Given the linguistic polarization of past elections, this bodes well for the future – this time they are together.

Update: Early Presidential elections are scheduled for Ukraine for May 25, 2014. It is expected that Canada will contribute more than 500 observers to help ensure a free and fair election.

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<p><i>This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.</i></p>		



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<p>ISSUE 176</p>	