

Statement by Chris Westdal, 3 March 2022.

Through the 15 years of my retirement from the Canadian foreign service, I have been a critic of NATO expansion, which I regarded as counterproductively provocative, and an advocate of detente, of engagement with Russia and of prudent respect for its security interests along its borders. I have also defended the leadership of Russian President Putin, believing that while he would not abide Ukrainian NATO membership, he could have Russia live in peace with an independent Ukraine.

I was wrong about Putin. I am sorry. I apologize.

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine breaks my heart, the part of it I left in Kyiv when I finished my term as Ambassador there 24 years ago. I watch and read the news these days with dread.

Though I fear for his and his people's fate, I have nothing but admiration for the leadership of President Zelensky and the courage of Ukrainians under ruthless attack.

As has been reported, I have severed my links with Russia, resigning last week from the board of Silver Bear Resources, which has built and now operates a silver mine in Yakutia.

I am grateful to Ukrainian-Canadian community leader, Borys Wrzesnewskyj, for saying that I have now done "the right thing." Would that I'd seen the light and done it sooner.