

# A Report from the Ukraine

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slight. There was a feeling of resentment in the air, but this did not intimidate the protesters. Some that I talked to were determined to stay, "until Friday." Slogans like "impeachment" and posters with the face of the Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk "decorated" the square.

The people's fury remains tentative. The controversial trade deal was a result of the EU's desire to expand into Eastern European economies and Ukraine's desire to move into a more modern and productive civilization. To many Ukrainians joining the EU meant a more Western way of life, more jobs, better education, and an overall more valuable economy.

Nonetheless, there was a spirit of solidarity among the people at the emblematic square. They were making small improvised fires to warm up in the cold evening as it was just starting to snow. Although it's not quite noticeable where the food is coming from, somebody constantly brought salo (a Ukrainian delicacy of smoked pork fat), preserved food, compote, or tea. "We are all volunteers here," a woman in her 30s stated as she insisted that I try her tea. People know each other - some met during this weekend and others (they say) are veterans from Maidan 2014.

The protesters were informed by their colleagues that more participants will arrive from the Lviv and Ivano-Frankovskaya oblast' in Western Ukraine by buses. The group planned to present a petition to the government and to remain in the square until they received the government's answer. Among the participants there was a man who lost his leg - probably a war-veteran. There was a student, a retired police-officer, and a white-collar worker who explained that he had to go to work the following day, but will definitely be back at the square in the evening. They sang sad Ukrainian folk songs and got into passionate political discussions.

The Ukraine-Russia war conflict continues on as Ukrainian forces still battle combined Russian-separatist forces in a two-year-old war that has killed more than 10,000 people, wounded 20,000 and displaced more than one million.

Finally, the protestor's pleas were finally met. Just few weeks prior to these events, on Sunday April, 10, Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, announced his resignation from office. The resignation was urged on by President Poroshenko and a no-confidence vote in the parliament because of his inability to implement government's reforms as well as other accusations of corruption.

The resignation, however, allowed Poroshenko to escape public attention and political pressure, as recent investigation in the Panama Papers revealed an attempt to evade tax rules in his offshore bank accounts.

In an editorial called Panama Petro, following the resignation, the Kyiv Post wrote, "the nearly 25 years of tax dodging and misspent government budgets show every day in shortened lives, bad education, poor health care, dilapidated buildings, potholed streets and myriad other problems that Ukraine should not tolerate."

It reveals that there is justification for the people's anguish. The apparent pattern of corruption reflects an even deeper issue of its normalcy amongst officials of post-soviet independence.

The Kozatsky Hotel, whose bright and radiant sign hangs over the square, was dark and looks like it is not in use at all. The building on the left side of Taras Shevchenko Lane was so crowded with people in uniform earlier, but that night lost its even lonely guard.

Back in the Senator Hotel, the TV reported that the protesters were a group of "paid Cossacks." I was taken back as I observed a completely different group of people on this cold brash night. In the end, only time will be able to reveal where the truth lies - in the people or with their government. For the good of that beautiful country - I hope that they are not on opposite ends.

