

## Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia, Ambassador Polyanskiy lectured at UVU



On April 7<sup>th</sup> of 2019, Deputy Permanent Representative (DPR) of Russia to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy, visited Utah Valley University. Ambassador Polyanskiy was asked difficult questions from excited students about the international relations of Russia. DPR of Russia to the UN stated that he is “not afraid to answer questions that many other nations are” and “Russia should not be afraid to address issues that are in its interest.” One of the most interesting questions was about Crimea.

DPR of Russia to the UN told the UVU students that he “sits on the UN Security Council” and that this is “almost the first opportunity that I have been able to travel out of New York in the last year and a half” and that “Utah is a very nice place.” Ambassador Polyanskiy was happy to know that there is so much student interest at UVU about Russia; “many of [the students] have Russian friends and a lot of them speak Russian.” DPR of Russia to the UN told the crowd that he “could

answer any questions; nothing is too taboo,” and “I will try to answer all of them.” “I will not try to compete with your professors, who know more about many subjects than I do, or the media, who seems to know everything.” Russia is a country in between China and Finland. Ambassador Polyanskiy claimed that “there is a trend to blame everything on my country,” that Russia has to defend “why we do this instead of that,” and “one task is to explain and defend our interest.” He continued “we have to come to terms” and “find a way to move forward,” and “as long as our officials are efficient on the Security Council, then there are no wars.”

It was at this time Ambassador Polyanskiy took questions. He responded to one student’s question by telling students to not “believe what you hear about Russian aggression in Crimea... we have a history... we share a culture,” and “we speak the same language.” DPR of Russia to the UN told the audience, “They have Russian people there and we are not viewing them as citizens of a different state.” Ambassador Polyanskiy told students about how there are people in Crimea who never wanted to leave the Soviet Union, but when the Soviet Union collapsed that wasn’t an option. “Those people who wanted to be a part of Russia again were ignored.” He claimed that they “tried to work with the EU so that our neighbors would not have to make a choice between relations with the EU or Russia.” DPR of Russia to the UN told students that there was an “agreement” between the EU and Crimea that outlined free trade between the EU and Crimea, but this agreement declared that Crimea would not trade with Russia. He went on, “what would that imply if they sign this agreement... [Russia] would have to protect our interest.” Ambassador Polyanskiy detailed, “This was an indication of the direction that Crimea would go... we have our own opinion of whether it was legal or not.” He explained, “The moment that people received the message that Russians will not be in this country, even the ones who helped [defend] it in [Crimea’s wars],” then “let’s meet and discuss this,” but “the leaders didn’t want that.” DPR of Russia to the UN addressed Ukraine saying, “We have many veterans in Russia; we can’t prevent them from going, but you can’t say that they are from the Russian military. It’s just not true.” He declared, “We have seen people with Russian military uniform, but you can see many people in [all kinds of different uniforms], you can see them in German uniforms because they can buy them in the market... We cannot ignore that they are Russian.”

This was one of the most interesting events to take place on campus recently and it is a treat to be able to ask diplomats from other countries difficult questions. Russia and the US have had a series of difficult events take place in the past few years, but Crimea is a topic particularly relevant to

UVU as many of the students come from Ukraine. It is interesting to hear the DPR of Russia to the UN be so bold in his convictions. It can usually be hard for students to gain access to Russian diplomats to ask the questions that are most pressing to them; however, UVU students had this opportunity and Ambassador Polyanskiy was kind to answer. I am excited, intrigued, and grateful that I had the opportunity to be present at this event.

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