

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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MATTHEW KAMINSKI

To the Judges:

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was one of the biggest international stories of 2014, and no one did a better job of explaining it than Matthew Kaminski in The Wall Street Journal. Though these 10 pieces are entered for the Commentary award, I would argue they were the best and most thoughtful explanation of the Ukraine conflict anywhere in the American media. If they weren't published in the Opinion section, I would enter them for the International prize.

Matt has spent most of his career in Europe and speaks Polish, Russian and Ukrainian. He has a wealth of sources in Kiev and Moscow, so he was ideally placed to cover the Ukraine drama, starting with the Maidan protests in Kiev in the autumn of 2013, through the ouster of Russian-backed autocrat Viktor Yanukovich in February, Vladimir Putin's invasions of Ukrainian territory, and the West's struggle to respond. Matt's sympathies clearly lie with the desire of most Ukrainians for a democracy that leans to the West, but he is always clear-eyed about the obstacles.

Matt didn't opine from a desk in New York. He spent weeks in the field, sometimes near heavy fighting in eastern Ukraine. This gives him a context and color for his commentary that sets it apart from most foreign coverage. He saw for himself and worked sources across the political spectrum in numerous countries far beyond the local U.S. Embassy.

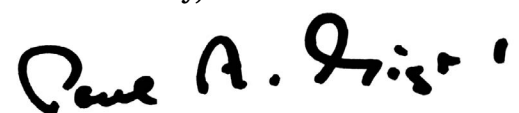
Most of these pieces focus on the overall battle for Ukraine, but I'd point to one in particular that shows the depth of his experience that serves readers. Shortly after the Russian invasion of Crimea, Matt traveled there and looked up a Tatar family that he had met 20 years earlier. "Russia Targets the Crimean Tatars—Again" (March 11) looks at the invasion through their frightened eyes in a way that reveals the human cost of global power-politics.

Matt also looks at the crisis from the vantage point of the Kremlin. In "Why Putin Fears Ukraine: It's an Alternative Russia," he shows how Putin's foreign policy reflects his need to heighten domestic political anxiety about foreign enemies. And in "Putin's Neo-Soviet Men" (March 27), Matt examines the attitudes of Russia's invaders first-hand in Crimea and through the Russian leader's speeches.

At heart Matt remains an optimist about the human desire for freedom, and on Sept. 5 he brought that perspective to failing states like Ukraine from the vantage point of Colombia, a once failing state that recovered with strong leadership and U.S. help. This is one of the pieces that won praise for Matt from across the American political spectrum in 2014.

Some of the most deserving Commentary awards have gone to foreign coverage, and I think Matt's passionate, insightful coverage of Ukraine, Russia and the West meets those standards of excellence. I am proud to nominate him for this year's Pulitzer Prize.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Gigot