



Solidarity for Ukraine – issue 55 - Number 9– Harvester's month

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the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) joins the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on February 24, 2022. The COVID pandemic has weakened democratic countries. Conspiracy theories and hate speech have exploded. This war in Europe is existential for the European Union. This newsletter is the 9th published in 2026 and the 55th since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. September, the 9th month of the year under the sign of the harvest. Russia perseveres in its bloody strategy, worthy of the Ninth of the works of Hercules, one of the bloodiest. Ukraine hopes to receive the rewards of its patient

years of effort and sacrifice in defending its independence and democracy. Europeans know the many challenges that lie ahead. The first is to consolidate its unity and confirm its solidarity with Ukraine, the outpost of the Russian peril that does not intend to stop at Ukrainian territory. The most worrying signs come from the defeatist and even denialist speeches of many European extremist parties. They have forgotten the past of the USSR and then Russia for a century. The Cold War was not the first cultural or ideological war waged by Russian or Soviet regimes. The second challenge is to arm ourselves against this hybrid war, fueled by active disinformation coming from Russia and its allies (China, Iran, North Korea...). It must form alliances with countries outside the EU that share our democratic values and are directly threatened by the strategies of authoritarian regimes (China, Iran, North Korea...) or democratic governments with authoritarian slippages (the United States since January 2025). The area of influence of the European Union is becoming clearer in the North Atlantic (with Canada) and in the Pacific (with South Korea, Japan, etc.), which are the object of all desires.

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* le logo a été dessiné par Caritas Canada en février 2022

Number nine - September, harvests' month

The 9th month of the year, September, is associated with harvests and accomplishment. The month of September invites us to reap the fruits of the efforts made in the previous months. We reflect on the actions initiated since January and decide which ways to abandon (without a future), and those to explore (with a future). September corresponds to the autumn equinox (around the third week of the month) which marks the perfect equality between day and night. We seek a balance, symbolized in astrology by Libra whose two plates represent a fair arbitration. We try to get rid of the superfluous to prepare for winter rest. In times of global warming, the transition seasons (autumn/spring) become shorter. Nature has suffered greatly from heat waves and mega-storms in Europe and North America. Nature has already changed its colors and the trees have shed their leaves. Desolate landscapes have an influence on the minds of living beings – humans are anxious, and animals are stressed when they have not been decimated by extreme heat or megafires.

September encourages humans to purify themselves, eliminate mental and emotional toxins, and return to basics. Religious celebrations around the world are associated with this idea of a new beginning and sometimes a new year (1). The Hindu community celebrates on September 4 the birth of Krishna (Krishna Janmashtami); the celebrations of Ganesh (Ganesh Chaturthi) will take place from September 14 to 25 with the immersion of the idols of Ganesh. The celebration of the Jewish New Year Rosh Hashana, year 5787, will take place between September 10 and 13, 2026. Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement will take place from September 20 to 21. The feast of Sukkot (which recalls the crossing of the desert, after leaving Egypt under the protection of God, and the end of agricultural harvests), will begin on September 25. The Muslim community celebrates the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi) on Saturday, September 5, 2026. In the Catholic religion, several important festivals mark the month of September: 8 September celebrates the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (birth of Mary); 14 September celebrates the Glorious Cross (or Exaltation of the Holy Cross or true Cross). Saints in September are the subject of particular devotions such as Saint Matthew on 21 September, Saint Padre Pio on 23 September, and Saint Vincent de Paul on 27 September. In the Orthodox religion, the first of September traditionally marks the beginning of the liturgical year.

This 9th month of the fifth year of war in Ukraine is a harrowing and murderous time for Ukraine. But it has sown many seeds since the election of President Zelensky in 2019 with a strategy of effort and perseverance that will bear fruit. Nothing is yet won or lost; the support of the West, including the United States, is imperative. But the configuration of alliances has changed. Doubt has crept into the hearts and minds of Russia and its allies, and the economic crisis aggravated by the climate threat has been decisive. We reap what we sow.

9th labour of Hercules in Russie

In the Twelve Labours of Hercules according to Diodorus Siculus, the Ninth labour corresponds to the Belt of Hippolytus, queen of the Amazons. It is one of the bloodiest. (2) After crossing the sea (renamed Pont-Euxin), Hercules declares war on the Amazons and comes to camp near the city where their queen resides, asking her for a belt, the object of his expedition. After their refusal, he gives battle to the Amazons. Hercules first attacks Aella, who is defeated. The second Amazon, Philippis, falls from a mortal wound. Then comes Prothoë, who is also killed. Hercules tames a fourth called Eriboea. Celeno, Eurybia and Phoebe, the companions of Diana the Huntress, are all massacred. Hercules then challenges Deireel, Asterius, Marpa, Tecmessa and Alcippus. They perish in their turn. Mélanippe, who commanded the Amazon troop, lost her command. Hercules kills the most famous of the Amazons, and forces the others to flee. He completely exterminates this nation. Among the captives, he chooses Antiope to present to Theseus. He brings back the coveted belt given by Mélanippe. Hercules was not a man of peace. (2)

This murderous course is a beautiful allegory of the "peaceful" relationship maintained by the USSR and then Russia for a century with its neighbors, its "comrades". Tsarist history was not friendly either. The Soviet or Russian regime attacked Ukraine three times (in 1919, 2014, and 2022). Georgia has been targeted by the same regimes three times (1921, then 1992 and finally 2008), while continuing its interference since with pro-Russian candidates in recent elections. Poland was invaded in 1920 and 1939 (German Soviet pact between Hitler and Stalin) and indirectly in 1981 (a state of emergency declared by pro-Soviet General Jaruzelski). During the Second World War, Finland was attacked in 1939 and the three Baltic states (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia) in 1940. During the Cold War, Soviet tanks entered Budapest (Hungary) in 1956, and Prague (Czechoslovakia) in 1968 with violent retaliation against opponents afterwards. Moldova was attacked in 1992, a year after the collapse of the USSR. In Asia, the USSR attacked Azerbaijan in 1920, Armenia in 1921 and then Afghanistan in 1979. After the implosion of the USSR, the Russian Federation waged a series of merciless wars against Chechnya between 1994 and 1999 (First War) and then from 1999 to 2009 (Second War), establishing a dictatorial regime that persecutes minorities. Russia went to war on the side of dictator Bashar al-Assad in 2015, whose clan has persecuted Syrians since 1970. Vladimir Putin actively cooperates with the Burmese regime that persecutes the Rohingyas, a Muslim minority (3).

The Ninth of the Labours of Hercules suits perfectly Russian President Vladimir Putin, elected in 2000, heir from a long history of war and murder against Russia's (or the USSR's) European or Asian neighbors, and allying in the Middle East or in Asia with the bloodiest regimes towards their populations, some of whom continue to be rampant – in Iran, the mullahs' regime since 1979; or in North Korea, the Kim dynasty since 1948.

9th month, expected harvests in Ukraine

The events of summer 2026 with a succession of substitutions at the top of the state confirms that Ukraine is on the right track (4).

Democracy is not built in a few months or years; it requires long and patient efforts. Bad mindsets have a hard time changing ; they reluctant to any change by nature. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 allowed members of the Warsaw Pact to gain independence, with varying fortunes. Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak republics, and the three Baltic states (Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia) were able to take their destinies into their own hands and begin a democratic and economic transition for joining the European Union. Other "satellite" countries have not had this chance. More Eastern, and therefore territorially closer to the Russian Federation, they still constitute a symbolic "buffer state" for the Russian regime. Successive Russian presidents have always fiercely opposed their entry into the Atlantic Treaty (NATO for military protection under American aegis) or the European Union (for economic, social and political support by supporting the Rule of law). The first skirmishes began with Georgia (firstly in 1992 and then 2008) where the Russian regime sought to impose its candidate in elections. Ukraine has undergone the same strategy of influence and active interference, considered by Russia as part of the "Holy Trinity" - Russia, Ukraine, Belarus. The Orange Revolution of 2004 did not allow the opposition to impose itself. The Maidan Revolution in 2014 was more decisive – Ukrainians asked to join the European Union. The Russian response was the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbas. A revolution, this time irreversible, for freedom and democracy, began with the election of Volodymyr Zelensky in 2019, denigrated and despised by the Russian president. By attacking Ukraine in February 2022, president Putin was convinced that Ukraine would be defeated and that the West would not follow. The courage, will and perseverance of the Ukrainians have won the support of the European countries and the United States, until now incredulous, and blinded by their own interests.

Radical changes take time. The fight against corruption of some Ukrainian leaders (in decision-making positions in the central administration and in the regions) is a patient work. Started in 2019 with the election of President Zelensky, it continued during the war. This is both a feat and a decisive element for Ukraine's entry into the EU. The dismissal of the Minister of Defense, Mikhaïlo Fedorov, who succeeded in drone warfare, is explained by the disruption he caused in a military staff trained at the Soviet school. He is not of their generation and does not have their mentality. Outraged by his exclusion, he called for elections in the middle of a war. Martial law does not allow it. The country's unity prevails in times of war. President Zelensky, massively supported by his population, has the intelligence and foresight to deal with a legacy of the past, which is open to criticism, to prepare for a serene and sustainable future. The seeds of democracy have been sown. A seed must die to bear fruit, and it requires time and many efforts.

End of article 9 in Europe

Japan is considering changing Article 9 of its Constitution (6), which provides for the pacifism of its country since the tragic end of World War II (with the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki). The European Union has also changed its mindset with the war in Ukraine (7). It had to review her software where peace and reconciliation between European nations inspired the construction of Europe. The EU has a large economic territory, a single market with common rules on public finances and a shared currency (Euro), and competition-friendly policies. It has built strong walls to defend its democratic values. The powerful arsenal of anti-discrimination measures, which has been developed since 2000, places respect for diversity at the forefront in all its facets (political and media pluralism, protection of minorities, respect for the rule of law...). The cultural war that the European Union has always been subjected to by its fierce opponents (extremist parties claiming a narrow sovereignty, with nationalist slippages), has increased with the Covid pandemic and then the war in Ukraine. The anti-European parties implicitly support Russia. Confronted with a more surprising war, not only tariff but also cultural, unleashed by its historical ally, the United States, the EU has been disoriented and destabilized. The EU first thought it was a form of "hazing" from the new team in Washington since 2025. Then the EU understood that the crisis was deep and that it had to move on to another strategy, less emotional, more rational in order to be part of new global geopolitics for its own survival. It has become a regional power.

Solidarity among European countries is the best bulwark against attacks from its critics, both outside the EU and in the heart of the EU. The war in Ukraine, like the trade war declared by the United States since 2025, are excellent tests to determine its true supporters (8). An important element for the EU's survival is to ally with countries, also mistreated by their former US ally. The idea is to form an implicit coalition to defend European values in the world, just as there is a coalition of the Volunteers for Ukraine (that met once more in the end of August on the ground and remotely). Canada, the first Ukrainian supporter (with a huge community of Ukrainian origins), has become a prime target for President Donald Trump (9). He demands their annexation as the 51st state, imposes extravagant tariffs on them and symbolically attacks their cultural identity; he denies Canadian bilingualism (for Canadian products) or renames Lake Ontario as Lake America (after the Gulf of Mexico). The Canadian prime minister has moved closer to Europe. South Korea is threatened by a potential military disengagement from the United States (constant since the 1950s Korean War) and worries about a rapprochement of President Trump (who wants the Nobel Peace Prize) with North Korea, a main support of Russia against Ukraine.

The EU is the ally of Canada, South Korea, Japan.... (10). Pacifism is no longer appropriate. It is a "symbolic" weapon of the enemies of Europe. When democracy is attacked, it must defend itself. Ukraine has led the way. *Slava Ukraini* !-

- (1) Religious celebrations- <https://www.catho-bruxelles.be/fetes-des-religions-du-monde-en-septembre>
- (2) Twelve labours of Hercules according to Diodorus of Sicily (National Library, BNF) <https://essentiels.bnf.fr/fr/extraits/94dd10f6-e0f1-44a0-bca2-25e28f7d7c7e-douze-travaux-hercule-selon-diodore-sicile>
- (3) Brice Pedroletti « La Birmanie et la Russie consolident leur alliance », Le Monde, 22 août 2026
- (4) Dismissal of former Defense Minister Mikhailov Fedorov in mid- July, replaced by General Oleksander Syrsky, who was in turn dismissed on July 21 after a mobilization of the Ukrainians denouncing his brutal methods inherited from his Soviet training and the appointment of Major General Mykhailo Drapaty – Ariane Chemin, « Zelensky se sépare du chef des forces armées », Le Monde, 31 juillet 2026
- (5) Thomas d'Istria « L'ex-ministre de la Défense ukrainien réclame des élections », Le Monde, 20 août 2026
- (6) Philippe Pons « Le pacifisme, pilier ébranlé de l'identité nationale japonaise », Le Monde, 15 & 17 août 2026
- (7) Editorial « Les Européens doivent accentuer leur soutien à l'Ukraine », Le Monde, 26 août 2026
- (8) Sophie Fay « Les alliés de l'Ukraine dénoncent la terreur russe », Le Monde, 26 août 2026
- (9) Alexandre Lepoutre « Au Canada, un front commun contre Trump », Le Monde, 25 août 2026
- (10) Léa Deseille « Libre-échange : pourquoi les nouveaux accords de l'UE ne se limitent plus aux droits de douane », Toute l'Europe, 20 juillet 2026-
<https://www.touteleurope.eu/economie-et-social/libre-echange-pourquoi-les-nouveaux-accords-de-l-ue-ne-se-limitent-plus-aux-droits-de-douane/>

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