



Solidarity for Ukraine – 01/10/2022- issue 8 - deconstruction

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24th February 2022. After a pandemic that has weakened democratic countries with the disturbing rise of conspiracy theories and hate speech on social networks, we do hope this war in Europe will be an opportunity to reflect on a new solidarity, among European and international allies. This newsletter is the eighth issue since March 1, 2022. We will publish a new issue every first day of the month as long as this brutal, total and illegal war lasts. According to Pentagon figures (1), 70,000 to 80,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or injured since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine (February – August 2022). Kiev authorities report at least

10,000 dead and 30,000 injured. Before embarking on an enterprise as extreme as war, the attacker must justify an imminent threat. For the Kremlin, it was characterized – the target was not so much Ukraine as the European Union, “the only object of my resentment” might say the Russian president plagiarizing Corneille (2). An original and unprecedented project, the construction of Europe has enabled the countries of Europe to rise patiently, in stages, from the greatest moral bankruptcy in their history. If the European Union is a construction project, that defended by the Russian president is its antithesis, a deconstruction.

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* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

At the origins of evil, European integration (1947-1957)

After World War II, Europe was a field of ruins. It is not just a question of loss of life or material destruction, but of moral defeat. The European values of humanism and universalism have been sorely tested. It was no longer the “Europe of Lights” but the “Europe of Darkness” that emerged in the 1920s with the rise of fascism in Italy (Mussolini came to power in 1922) and Nazism in Germany (Hitler was elected in 1933). This Europe of darkness and obscurantism led to the worst (with the assassination of 6 million Europeans because they were Jews). All European countries were accessory but the United Kingdom (and Denmark), the only European country represented at the Yalta conference in 1945 alongside the USSR and the United States.

Sometimes History is ironic. The Yalta conference, also known as the Crimean conference, was held in a Ukrainian city illegally annexed by Russia in 2014. According to the French historian Georges-Henri Soutou (3), the conference has provoked and still provokes the greatest debates. The most widespread interpretation is that of «sharing the world», a «cynical agreement between the United States and the USSR to divide Europe. This myth was popularized in France in 1947 by General de Gaulle and refers to the vision of the «double hegemony» American-Soviet, supposed to have dominated international relations after 1945. In fact, Yalta allowed the reconstruction of a new European order based on democracy, and on a common management of the continent’s major problems by the winners of 1945. Europe’s fathers, the founding countries of the European Union, were not invited because they had been defeated - France and the Vichy collaborationist regime (de Gaulle, head of the France Libre was not invited) Nazi Germany, fascist Italy but also the three countries of Bénélux (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg).

After the successive failures of the European Defence Community (EDC) (French rejected it before the National Assembly in 1954), and that of a European Political Community project, European integration is now continuing on an economic level within the framework of a “de facto” solidarity according to the statement of Robert Schumann, one of the founding fathers of Europe with his French colleague Jean Monet, and his German counterparts Konrad Adenauer and Italian Alcide De Gasperi(4). A first stage was the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1954 – *“through the pooling of basic products and the establishment of a new High Authority, whose decisions were to be binding on France, Germany and the countries which acceded to it”* the ECSC *“will carry out a first concrete foundation of a European federation, indispensable to the preservation of peace”* (5).

In 1957, the two Treaties of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). If the long-term objective is the union of the peoples in Europe, we must first create a common market in which people, goods, services and capital move freely .

Communicating vessels – when EU progresses, USSR regresses (1957-1991)

If the Soviet Union had seemed the great winner of the war, tensions quickly rose in Europe and with the United States. The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was a Soviet provocation and the formalization of the rupture. But as early as 1946 the «iron curtain» had been evoked by Winston Churchill (6) who theorized the creation of two ideological blocs- the Western bloc around the United States and the European Union against the Soviet bloc- the USSR and the popular democracies. As the European Union enlarged, democracies in Europe progressed while the Soviet system was increasingly contested.

Until the implosion of the USSR in 1991, the new member countries came mainly from the West, North and South of Europe. In the early 1970s, Europe rose from 6 to 9 with the accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark – Norway, a party to the negotiations, finally declined (after the referendum failed among its population). In the 1980s, Europe rose to 12 with the entry of Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986. These new members are very important since they corresponded with the end of military regimes in Greece, but also in Spain (with the death of Franco in 1975) and in Portugal (with the Carnation Revolution which sounded the death knell of Salazar).

From the implosion of the USSR, the accessions are much more symbolic with the entries of Finland and Austria (1995), countries «neutralized» at the express request of the USSR. According to Finnish writer Sofi Oksanen, the concept of “Finlandization” is a «submission to the will of the powerful Russian neighbour» that «blurred the moral compass of his country» (7). Austria was occupied, as was East Berlin after the war between four zones of occupation (American, British, Russian and French). It seemed to be caught between the western and eastern world until it entered the European Union which was a form of emancipation after its annexation during the war by Nazi Germany (from 1938 with the Anschluss) and then put under surveillance. It once again existed as a nation, free and independent, without influence.

The most decisive enlargements, “casus belli” for Russia, were the entry of 10 new member countries in the EU in 2004 and then two countries in 2007, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, belonging to the former zone of Soviet influence - in 2004, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Slovenia, the three Baltic countries (with a large Russian-speaking population) and the Mediterranean islands (Cyprus and Malta); in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania, two equally totalitarian regimes subservient to the USSR. Jaruzelski’s regime in Poland was contested by the Solidarnosc trade union in 1979; the May 1989 protest was the beginning of the end for the USSR, not only for the Poles, but for all the citizens of the former satellite countries with the highlight of the fall of the Berlin wall in October 1989. Soviet tanks could no longer do anything, as in Budapest in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968 – the Soviet Union would implode in 1991. Freedom was in motion and would not stop.

Russian response – a planned deconstruction

With the accession of Vladimir Putin to the Presidency in 2000, Russia began a vast all-out offensive to deconstruct what the European Union had patiently built for nearly fifty years. His goal was to set up a Europe “from the Atlantic to the Urals” which he hoped would be a return to the “glorious past” of Yalta. This strategy of sabotage and intoxication included two phases: first, preventing new European countries (former satellite countries of the USSR) from joining the European Union; second, drowning the countries already members by relying on movements or political leaders against European Union to undermine the morale of public opinion and discredit the European construction (Trojan Horse strategy).

The Russian strategy was announced by Vladimir Putin at the end of 2007 during the press conference where the virulence of his attacks against the United States but also Europe surprised. Several months later, in the summer of 2008, Russia intervened in Georgia, relying on pro-Russian separatists, as the Kremlin said it was too tempted to join the European Union. The same strategy was applied in Ukraine in 2014 when the incumbent Ukrainian leader suggested a rapprochement with the European Union- the Maidan revolution was repressed by pro-Russian separatists and Crimea was annexed with a guerrilla war that began in Donbass. In the elections manipulated in Belarus in 2020, the Russian president supported the incumbent Belarusian leader, against the hard-suppressed pro-democracy and pro-European demonstrators. A strategy to destabilize the European Union began the following year by exploiting migrants from Syria and the Middle East. They were offered visas for Belarus, but were turned back at the Polish border. The image of the European Union, and its values, was damaged and immediately weaponised to discredit the EU’s solidarity and its alleged “variable geometry” democracy.

The Russian destabilization strategy has also been to undermine the European construction from within by relying on political parties or leaders openly hostile to the European Union. Many far right parties in Europe have benefited from the financial support of Russia- “Golden Dawn” in Greece, the “Northern League” in Italy, or the “National Front” in France. Victor Orban’s authoritarian Hungary also supported Russia. Some extremist leaders mentioned old anti-American plot theories forgetting that the United States had saved Europe in 1944 by taking the lead of the Allies (8). A great Russian “success” was the Brexit in 2016; intelligence hackers have poisoned the public opinion (9). The European countries in which public opinion is the most reluctant to condemn Russia, and which blamed the war in the United States and NATO, are those where the extreme right parties are the most established (9). Russia no longer relies on the Communist International but on the post-fascist and post-nazi International. Other times, other mores.

Counter-offensive in Europe – a European Union on the frontline (June 2022)

The biggest strategic mistake made by the Russian president is not only that he underestimated his «official» opponent, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenski, but that he misjudged the symbolic importance of the war in Europe - for European countries, but especially for the European Union. The European Commission is on the front line to defend European values and support the attacked Ukraine.

It is no coincidence that the President of the Commission, a German woman, former Defence Minister in the government of Angela Merkel, has been an unwavering supporter of the Ukrainian President since the beginning of the conflict. Vladimir Putin's coarseness with the German chancellor is well known - knowing that she feared dogs, he had received her with a Labrador, as large as the string he used (10). The Russian president may have known the STASI (East German secret police) agent who had approached Angela Merkel, then a promising young scientist in the GDR. She had answered with candour, a formidable weapon, that she had to decline his offer - she was too talkative and would be unable to keep any secret. Such is taken who believed to take. The same rudeness was observed towards Ursula Von der Leyen, during a meeting in Istanbul in 2020. The Turkish President and his protocol had “forgotten” to offer her a chair, leaving the President of the Commission standing (11). In the virilist approach of the leaders of «illiberal» regimes, the fact that a woman is at the head of a country or an institution, immediately discredits the nation or the organization that committed the “weakness” of electing or appointing them - it doesn't matter if these women own a PHD in Physics (Angela Merkel) or Medicine (Ursula von der Leyen).

Vladimir Putin regrets the «glorious» times of the USSR. Obsessed with the past, he neglected an important dimension of European construction: the ratcheting effect. When one has lived and grown up in democratic and free countries (young Europeans), it is impossible to go back to the times of totalitarian regimes. The European Union is not a “view of the mind”, a “storytelling”, or an “element of language” of an aboveground institution. European citizens, and especially young people, can appreciate it every day, by circulating freely in a huge and peaceful territory, using (for most of the countries) the same currency, with diplomas that are recognized in all member countries, the possibility to live and work where you want, to express yourself freely, to access free and pluralistic media, to vote for different parties that defend various social projects, to have a fair trial or to be able to defend their rights if they are not respected

When you grow up with the Internet and the profusion of television and radio channels, you can't be back to “black and white” channels, or one radio with one program. It is not ideological, it is human. Deconstruction has its limits.

- (1) In total, according to the Pentagon, "70,000 to 80,000 Russian soldiers" have been killed or wounded since the invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February. Ukrainian forces also suffered heavy casualties; Kiev reported at least 10,000 dead and 30,000 injured (August 9, 2022- [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/europe/manifestations-en-ukraine/guerre-en-ukraine-ce-qu-il-faut-retenir-de-la-journee-du-lundi-8-aout_5299816.html#xtor=EPR-2-\[newsletterquotidienne\]-20220809-\[lestitres-colgauche/titre2\]](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/europe/manifestations-en-ukraine/guerre-en-ukraine-ce-qu-il-faut-retenir-de-la-journee-du-lundi-8-aout_5299816.html#xtor=EPR-2-[newsletterquotidienne]-20220809-[lestitres-colgauche/titre2]))
- (2) Pierre Corneille « Horace », character of Camille « Rome, unique object of my resentment», Paris, 1648, play inspired by the Latin author Tite-Live
- (3) SOUTOU Georges-Henri, « Yalta, or the division of the world between the three Great Ones», in : Jean Lopez éd., *Les mythes de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Tome 1.* Paris, Perrin, « Tempus », 2018, p. 409-429. DOI : 10.3917/perri.lopez.2018.01.0409. URL : <https://www.cairn.info/--9782262075118-page-409.htm>
- (4) Eurostat (1995) under the direction of Louis Pracht, "Europe in figures", Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities
- (5) Robert Schumann, Declaration of 9 May 1950 on the project for a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to be launched in 1954 by the Treaty of Paris
- (6) Fulton's Speech from 1946- <https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/textes/churchill05031946.htm>
- (7) Sofi Oksanen «For Russia, the ideal would be to “finlandiser” all Europe, and not only Ukraine», published by the newspaper Le Monde, Sunday 6 & Monday 7 March 2022
- (8) Theory that the CIA is behind the European construction – revived by Philippe de Villiers in France, who backed far-right candidate Eric Zemmour in the 2022 presidential elections. The only “true” element is the decisive role played by the United States in disembarking in Normandy in June 1944 and in implementing the Marshall Plan in 1947 – so this was not a “trusteeship” project but a real rescue of Europe that would no longer exist without the American help
- (9) In July 2020, UK MEPs from the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) called for the UK government to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign, presenting a report on the Russian influence on politics in the United Kingdom.- France 24, July 2020- <https://www.france24.com/fr/20200721-royaume-uni-brexit-ingerence-russe-rapport-deputes-britanniques-enquete>
- (10) European Council for International Relations (ECFR) survey of 8,000 citizens from nine EU countries and the United Kingdom, published on 15 June 2022 – Stéphanie Le Bars, Le Monde, 16 June 2022
- (11) Extract from the magazine "8:30pm on Saturday" broadcast on November 21, 2020, just after the French newspaper 2- info on the video on: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-magazine/france-2/20h30-le-samedi/video-le-jour-ou-le-labrador-de-vladimir-poutine-a-effraye-la-chanceliere-angela-merkel-qui-a-la-phobie-des-chiens_4190141.html
- (12) « sofagate » incident- https://www.bfmtv.com/international/incident-du-sofagate-ursula-von-der-leyen-s-est-sentie-blessee-et-seule-en-tant-que-femme_AD-202104270187.html

Useful Contacts

To help Ukraine, here is a list of associations & NGOs published on the site [Support Ukraine](#)

Croix-Rouge Française - [Croix-Rouge française](#) pour des dons financiers, en soutien de la Croix-Rouge ukrainienne, au Comité International de la Croix-Rouge

Médecins sans frontières - [fonds d'urgence](#) dans les pays limitrophes de l'Ukraine et cherchent à faire entrer du matériel médical et du personnel.

Secours populaire - lance un appel aux [dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine](#) .

Protection civile - un appel aux dons pour financer d'autres besoins (défibrillateurs, respirateurs, groupes électrogènes, etc.) : <https://don.protection-civile.org/soutenir>

Fondation de France - lance un [appel à la générosité](#) pour soutenir les centaines de milliers de personnes affectées par le conflit en Pologne et en Roumanie

Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés - situation d'urgence de niveau 3 pour la crise en Ukraine, le plus élevé. L'UNHCR a renforcé ses opérations en Ukraine et dans les pays voisins, pour la soutenir, vous pouvez faire un don : site [Donner.unhcr.org](#)

Unicef - un besoin urgent de financement pour répondre aux besoins essentiels des enfants Pour faire un [don sur le site Unicef.fr](#) .

ONG Care International - un [formulaire en ligne de dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine](#) pour apporter une aide d'urgence aux populations et aux réfugiés.

L'ONG française ACTED organise des convois humanitaires pour l'Ukraine

association Solidarités International – une [collecte des fonds](#) pour envoyer des convois de vivres et biens de première nécessité, distribuer de l'eau et des repas aux réfugiés

Plan International, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](#) pour ce faire.

L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - [HelloAsso](#) ;

Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins [via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS.](#)

JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée [Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine](#) .

Les Banques alimentaires - une [aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine](#), dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés.

La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

L'Association des maires de France a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#) . De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité

La plateforme officielle « [Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine](#) » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France.

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.

Source : <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/actualites/A15542>

The Catholic mission of the Polish Church in France also suggests the following link:

<https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/>

Source : French catholic conference of the archbishops