



## SolidarityUkraine- issue 40- Black alchemy

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) has been associated since 24 February 2022 with international solidarity in favour of Ukraine attacked by Russia. The COVID pandemic has weakened democratic countries. Conspiracy theories and hate speech have exploded on social media. This new war in Europe is no longer peripheral, it has become existential for the European Union which plays its influence in the world. This newsletter is the 6th published in 2025 and the 40th since the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Black is a scary color in the Bible. It evokes the darkness, the underworld, hell, the night carrying childish terrors. Black is also the color of authority, austerity and elegance for many designers. The French artist Pierre Soulages has created a

“black side” which is “relief, satin light, hidden, then sharp”. (1) Black is associated with hydrocarbons, the black gold (Oil) that made the fortune of Vladimir Putin and his cronies, the «gang of oligarchs». It allowed to exercise a blackmail on the Westerners who have implicitly betrayed Ukraine by agreeing to buy cheap oil and gas from Russia that could finance its wars. The black suns are associated with ultra-right and far-right extremism largely supported by Russia since Putin came to power and declared war on the West in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference. In 2025, the threat is more frightening as it comes from the allies of the West, the United States. A curious alchemy occurs in this year that celebrates the end of the Second World War (1945-2025). The allies of yesterday who allowed the triumph of freedom and democracy in the XXth Century are engaged in a curious ideological and economic war. A surprising black alchemy.

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\*logo designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

## Black Colour

For Michel Pastoureau (2), black is associated in the Bible with trials, the dead, sin, the earth and the underworld, hell. The Protestant Reformation rehabilitated it by associating it with temperance, humility, austerity, carried by monks and dignitaries. It has become the symbol of authority with judges in courts or arbitrators on sports fields. The great couturiers adopted it as the color of elegance after the ecclesiastics (Luther) or the princes (Charles V). In ancient societies, two words are used to qualify it: in Latin «niger» which means a brilliant black (which gave the French black) and ater (which gave atrabilaire, the black bile». Portugal and its great wealth of heritage had launched a communication campaign whose slogan was «the country where black is color». In the Far East, the color of mourning is white (the deceased becomes a body of light). In the West, the deceased returns to the earth, to the ashes, the dark color is imposed. The black flag is that of the pirates, like the jersey of the rugby team the «All Blacks» of New Zealand who carry the mourning of their opponents. The anarchists made it their colour; then it was taken over by the ultra-redcoats (the brown shirts of the fascists, and the black uniforms of the nazis). French “Black movies” designate scary thrillers. In astrophysics, a black hole is a celestial object so compact that the intensity of its gravitational field prevents any form of matter or radiation. When we talk about “black book” or “dark pages of our history”, we are talking about troubled times where unforgivable crimes were committed. In painting, for Caravaggio, black represents the shadow, anguishing or criminal. A contemporary, Jusepe Ribeira is darker and fiercer than his master. The chiaroscuro becomes dramatic. Art critics have called it “extreme tenebrism”.

In the American saga of Star Wars (3), Darth Vader is the dark character; in original version, Darth Vader. George Lucas merged two English words, "dark," and "death," death. Vader is also a mix between "invader," and "father." He's not the only one. He is the "dark side of strength". The fallen angel. The figure of Elon Musk, passed from a flawless support for the Democratic party to the first adviser of Donald Trump could symbolize a twenty-first century Darth Vader. At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, he equipped the Ukrainians with his Space X Starlinks satellites and then financed them by the American administration. It has been reported that Elon Musk had secretly ordered his engineers to shut down the Starlink satellite communications network near the Crimean coast in September 2022 to disrupt a Ukrainian attack on the Russian naval fleet (4). This information was revealed in a biography of the billionaire, entitled “Elon Musk” published in 2023. According to his biographer, Walter Isaacson, the Ukrainian submarine drones loaded with explosives were ready to attack the Russian fleet in the Black Sea. But they “lost their connection and ran aground on the shore without damage”. Elon Musk claimed to fear a new Pearl Harbor and thus a Third World War.

## Black gold in Russia

A three-part documentary explained “the rise, fall and rebirth of a handful of businessmen” who privatised state-owned companies exploiting Russia’s oil and gas resources when the Soviet Union fell in 1991 (5). These “oligarchs” are totally under the power of Russian president, Vladimir Putin, to whom they owe their colossal fortune. International sanctions have brought them even closer to their “godfather”. The documentaries describe the economic system “omnipotent and without faith or law”, tentacular, of the same functioning as another “octopus”, the Italian mafia whose pyramid structure was dismantled by the Italian judge Falcone brutally murdered in Palermo, after locking up thousands of mafiosi by showing their responsibilities. The same words are used to describe the methods of the Russian oligarchs “brutality, greed, thirst for power”. They have made available to the master of the Kremlin the colossal financial manna of black gold”. The reserves are huge and allow to finance Putin’s wars

The Western associates of the Russian oligarchs have joined in Vladimir Putin’s game whose aim was to “infiltrate, corrupt and dominate the West in order to rebuild an empire, that of holy Russia”. In Germany, the flashy and widely publicized friendship of former chancellor Gerhard Schroeder is well known. Less known is the strategy of former Total CEO Christophe de Margerie, who accidentally disappeared in 2014 in Moscow. Vladimir Putin named a giant Russian methane tanker with his name in recognition for “services rendered” to grateful Russia. He was the first to denounce and fight in all circles of influence in Europe the sanctions taken against Russia after the invasion of Crimea and Donbass that followed the Maidan revolution of 2014. Ukrainians were demonstrating to join the European Union, considered as a threat and a personal attack for Vladimir Putin. The larveful war against Ukraine and the West began at that moment after an incendiary speech delivered by the Russian president in 2007. The negotiations conducted both by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande began in 2014. They were totally out of place and unnecessary. The only way to coerce Vladimir Putin was to stop the western supply of Russian gas and oil that financed his wars. Europeans were trapped by the low costs of their energy.

The construction of the Nord Stream (I and II) gas pipelines, which pass through the Baltic Sea to connect Germany, was the first betrayal of the West towards Ukraine. They have deprived Ukraine of the rights paid for the passage on their territory of the Russian pipelines that provided the country with \$3 billion annually, and could have allowed its economic development. It is no coincidence that they were sabotaged on September 26, 2022, seven months after the outbreak of war by Russia, by a Ukrainian commando. The German Public Prosecutor’s Office issued a warrant for arrest for the first time in August 2024 against one of its members who had taken refuge in Poland without being disturbed (6)

## Black suns in Ukraine

The yearly Munich Security Conference held on 14 and 15 February 2025 evoked the same sideration as that of 2007 when President Vladimir Putin openly attacked the West. This declaration of subliminal war was carried out in Georgia in 2008, then in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 by increasing interference in Moldova or Georgia, countries candidates for EU membership. The sideration is intense in 2025 with an American ally who has declared an ideological war on Europe in the person of its vice president J.D Vance (7). According to him, the greatest threat is not “neither Russia nor China” but the “renunciation” of Europe to its “most fundamental” values. European democracies are accused of stifling innovation, freedom of expression and religious freedom. He also made an implicit call for an alliance between the German right and extreme right political parties, a clear interference in the internal affairs of an allied country. The Trump administration has put its steps in those of Elon Musk, who after a lightning and not glorious passage at the head of the DOGE just left the presidential team at Washington . He had supported the leader of the far-right AfD party, a candidate for the Chancellery.

In Munich, in February 2025, the vice president JD Vance reproached the organizers of the Conference for Security in Europe for not having invited the two political parties hostile to arms deliveries to Ukraine and thus favorable to the Russian interests. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius reacted strongly to JD Vance’s remarks in Munich by condemning the comparison of European countries with “authoritarian regimes”. He recalled that German democracy allows “small extremist parties like the AfD to run campaigns like all other parties”. He added that “democracy does not mean that a vociferous minority is automatically right”. The new German chancellor Friedrich Merz, member of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany., appointed on May 6, 2025 has not ceased to provide unfailing support to President Volodymir Zelenski by affirming military support and denouncing Russian refusals to cease fire .

Thomas Piketty, professor of economics and director of studies at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), calls trumpism “national capitalism”, characterized by “a mixture of brutal nationalism, socialist conservatism and unbridled economic liberalism” (8). For the French economist, the American economic strategy that tries to show its strength by multiplying provocations against its allies since his inauguration on January 20, 2025, is «in reality fragile, and desperate». Everything will depend on Europe and its attitude. It must “regain self-confidence, forge new alliances and analyse the strengths and limitations of this ideological matrix”. For Thomas Piketty, the Trumpian model has several weaknesses – “the powers heated to blank end up devouring each other”, “the dream of prosperity promised by national-capitalism always ends up disappointing popular expectations. But “lasting prosperity requires educational, social and environmental investments that benefit all.” He concludes that in Europe even the nationalist right does not want to return to the military postures of the past.

## Black alchemy

In «L'œuvre au noir», the academician writer Marguerite Yourcenar was inspired by a process known in alchemy. The black alchemy (melanosis in Greek, nigredo in Latin), was placed under the sign of Saturn: there is death, dissolution of mercury and coagulation of sulphur. The alchemists prepared, in an agate mortar, an intimate mixture of three constituents. The first, 95%, is a mineral: arsenic pyrite. By creating the character of Zeno, a 16th century alchemist and physician, Marguerite Yourcenar recounts the tragic fate of an extraordinary man (9). It also evokes a time of infinite wealth, but of an “harsh and brutal reality; a contrasting world where the Middle Ages and the Renaissance collide, and where modern times are already looming”. Zeno aspires to this New World that will be born of this confrontation as a free and educated man. But his fight will end by crushing it. A strange alchemy is also occurring in the free and democratic world since the inauguration of a new American president in January 2025. The allies of yesterday, first and foremost the United States which intervened twice during the twentieth century to provide decisive assistance to European countries in the face of the will for power of empires (World War I) or authoritarian regimes (World War II), no longer agree on the components of democratic alchemy, so fragile but so essential to freedom

The US administration formalizes, without even discussing it, the change by force in Europe of borders considered inviolable under international law and the invasion of 20% of Ukrainian territory by Russia (10). European commentators have acknowledged the Russian influence and criticised the cavalier approach of the US team. The United States began negotiating the peace process by talking with the aggressor, Russia, in the absence not only of the country attacked, Ukraine, but also of those who support it and who will suffer the consequences, the European Union and its member countries. Emergency meetings held in Paris on 17 and 19 February 2025 to react together to the US coup d'état were taking place at the same time as a US delegation met with its Russian counterparts in Saudi Arabia on 18 February 2025. President Trump has finally become impatient against his Russian counterpart who refused to meet with Ukrainian President Zelenski in Ankara at the end of May 2025 under the aegis of Turkish President Erdogan who had proposed himself as mediator. He called Vladimir Putin «completely mad» (11) after the massive attacks launched by the Kremlin against Ukraine in May. The unceasing determination of the European Union with most of its member countries (with the exception of Hungary and Slovakia) are the main assets of Ukraine.

Between the black alchemy, symbol of a major change of era, and the overblack (outrenoir) by Pierre Soulages which is not absence of color but light, Ukraine and Europeans must create together a New world, multipolar, that is no longer American. *Simul et Singulis* - together while remaining ourselves (12). ***Slava Ukraini !***

- (1) Sonia Dubois, « Pierre Soulages, mémoire d’outrenoir »- <https://chezlolagassin.com/pierre-soulages-memoire-doutre-noir/> téléchargé le 18 février 2025
- (2) Michel Pastoureau et Dominique Simonnet (2005) « Le petit livre des couleurs », Paris : Editions du Panama
- (3) Georges Lucas, 1977, ‘Star Wars », USA
- (4) Walter Isaacson, 2023 « Elon Musk », New York : éditions Simon & Schuster ; Paris : éditions Fayard
- (5) Jérôme Fritel et Marc Froche (2024) « Oligarques, le gang de Poutine », Arte, diffusé le 11 février 2025- <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/RC-026052/oligarques-le-gang-de-poutine/>
- (6) Thomas Wieder « **Sabotage de Nord Stream : l’Allemagne émet un mandat d’arrêt contre un Ukrainien** », 14 août 2024 [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/08/14/sabotage-de-nord-stream-berlin-emet-un-mandat-d-arret-contre-un-ukrainien\\_6280552\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/08/14/sabotage-de-nord-stream-berlin-emet-un-mandat-d-arret-contre-un-ukrainien_6280552_3210.html)
- (7) Elsa Conesa et Sylvie Kauffmann « Un parfum de guerre idéologique » ? Le Monde, 16 & 17 février 2025
- (8) Thomas Piketty « Trump, le national-capitalisme aux abois », le Monde idées, 16 & 17 février 2025
- (9) Marguerite Yourcenar « L’œuvre au noir », Paris : Gallimard, awarded Féminina price in 1968 - <https://www.gallimard.fr/catalogue/l-oeuvre-au-noir/9782070367986>
- (10) Speech delivered by Pete Hegseth, American secretary of Defense - <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2025/02/12/sur-lotan-et-lukraine-les-nouvelles-lignes-rouges-americaines-le-discours-integral-de-pete-hegseth-a-bruxelles/>
- (11) Laurence Saint Gilles, La Croix, 30 mai 2025- <https://www.la-croix.com/a-vif/donald-trump-est-il-en-train-de-sortir-de-l-emprise-de-vladimir-poutine-20250529>
- (12) Motto of the French public theater Comédie française

Newsletter written on Wednesday, February 19, 2025 updated on June 1, 2025



**Plan International**, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don) pour ce faire.- <https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don>

**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 - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

**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. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

**JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr** est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine .- <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

**Les Banques alimentaires** - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

**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 - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

**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.- <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.- <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

**Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF)** - Depuis le début de l'offensive russe en Ukraine, BSF se mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. « Bonjour France » est une application pour smartphone innovante et totalement gratuite, qui propose un apprentissage accéléré du français depuis l'ukrainien, disponible depuis le 19 octobre 2022.

<https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>

La mission catholique de l'Eglise polonaise en France suggère également le lien suivant : <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/> - **Source** : conférence des évêques de France