



Solidarity Ukraine –issue 53 - Number 7 – Independence Day

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The Research and Information Institute on Volunteering (iriv) joins in 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 7th published in 2026 and the 53rd since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. July, the seventh month of the year under the sign of independence for Europe and Ukraine vis-à-vis the United States, which is celebrating the 250th anniversary of its "Independence Day," the 4th of July, which inspired an iconic song by American singer Bruce Springsteen (1). For the French National Day on July 14, 2026, the Coalition of

the Volunteers (37 states) initiated by France and the United Kingdom to guarantee a lasting peace in Ukraine will parade in Paris. President Putin's Russia is shredding the seven deadly sins of any totalitarian regime with deeply corrupt leaders. On the contrary, Ukraine is inspired by Saint Thomas d'Aquin and his seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, foremost among which are intelligence and science. The Europeans won a victory in Evian (France) at the meeting of the "Group of 7" or G7 composed of Germany, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom. The European Union has been fully associated with it since 1977. The Europeans managed to convince the US president to change his stance on Ukraine. Donald Trump led an all-out offensive in 2025 to bend the Ukrainians whom he considered lost and losers, so that they accept a "deal" with Russia which had attacked them. The Ukrainians have toppled the table – now they have “the cards,” with EU backing.

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* logo designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Number seven, holy number

In the Bible, the number 7 is used more than 700 times (2). It is associated with divine fullness and perfection. In Genesis, God rests on the 7th day; seven pairs of each animal are taken on Noah's Ark. In Exodus, a seven-branched candlestick is mentioned and in Isaiah, seven qualities are attributed to the Messiah. In the book of Revelation, the number 7 appears 50 times- seven letters to seven churches in Asia, seven golden candlesticks, seven stars in the right hand of Christ, seven seals of God's judgment, seven angels with seven trumpets. In the Exodus (22:30), animals must be at least seven days old to be sacrificed. In the Book of Kings (5:10), Naraman with leprosy must bathe seven times in the Jordan. In Joshua (6:3-4), he is ordered to walk around Jericho for seven days and to seven priests to sound the seven trumpets seven times inside the walls of the city. The Sabbath is the holy day of rest (Deuteronomy 5:12). - "We must keep the Sabbath, rest (and see that others rest too), and recognize that God is the source of our existence. In the seventh heaven, there are pure souls (in Hebrew *Araboth*). In Islamic cosmology (3), it is question of the seven Heavens and the seven Earths, signs of a universal recognition of a number synonymous with order and harmony. From the first surah of the Koran, a privileged status is given to the number 7 with seven verses. During the pilgrimage to Mecca, pilgrims must throw seven pebbles at the stele of Mina, and make seven rounds around the Kaaba..

The religious approach has an impact on our secular lives with the seven days of the week or the recommendation (inspired by Solomon in the Bible) made to the sage to turn "his tongue seven times in his mouth before speaking" or the seven deadly sins. Seven sceneries were presented in Paris on Tuesday, January 23, 2026, during the national and republican tribute paid to the French historian Marc Bloch (4), and his wife Simonne, at their entry into the Panthéon, dedicated to the "great people". The seven sceneries depicted the fight of a French man, Jewish, secular, heir to an Alsatian family that chose France (the "optants"). A renowned historian, he founded a new scientific method, the *École des Annales*. He fought and was decorated during the two world wars - First World War (1914-1918) and Second World War (1939-1945). Engaged while he could have escaped (he was 52 years old, the father of six children), he joined the Resistance, was arrested by the Gestapo in Lyon, tortured and shot along with other prisoners. In the vibrant tribute paid to him by French President Emmanuel Macron (5), on behalf of all French people, he recalled the lucidity of Marc Bloch who never stopped analyzing his time. A book written after the *Débâcle* of 1940 is a reference for historians - "The strange defeat" (6). The French president highlighted the relevance of Marc Bloch's warning in France and in Europe by warning against "the strange defeats" of the Western world in the face of attacks against democracy, fueled by declinism, hate speech, and disinformation. "*Dilexit veritatem*" (7), the epitaph chosen by March Bloch singularly resonates.

Seven deadly sins in Russia

Heir to a long tradition of corruption characteristic of the Soviet era, Putin's Russia does not escape any of the seven deadly sins (greed, anger, envy, gluttony, lust, pride, laziness). A book written by a Russian writer who became a member of the French Academy, Andreï Makine, "The Daughter of a Hero of the Soviet Union" (8), published in 1990, the year before the collapse of the USSR, is telling of the state of mind during the Soviet era. Even the only daughter of a hero decorated with the Golden Star of the Soviet Union, who has a good education and promised to a bright future, does not escape the general corruption that has plagued the party apparatus and the apparatchiks. She was trapped during her first job as a translator at the Moscow International Olympic Center in 1980. After an adventure with a French athlete, she is recruited by the KGB "that can all". Olia was born "one day in November, in the atmosphere of post-war jubilation where everything seems possible". She becomes a "red sparrow", a spy responsible for missions "in the bedroom" with foreigners on a business trip to Moscow. She cannot escape this sad destiny as her hierarchical superior explains to her with frankness and fatality. "Heavy are the human crosses". She can try to choose another one, but they will all prove to be heavier than hers; and she will resign herself to her fate

Vladimir Putin's rise after the fall of the USSR in 1991 was linked to the underworld of Saint Petersburg, his hometown where he returned and joined the municipal team. Interloping backgrounds like nicknames. His links were known with Prigojine, the "cook", who became boss of the mercenaries of the "Wagner" organization. Vladimir Putin's armed wing in foreign countries where Russia was not supposed to intervene (Syria, African countries, etc.), disappeared in August 2023 after a putsch attempt supported by Russian ultra-nationalists. Ilia Traber, "the antique dealer", another godfather of the Saint Petersburg mafia, protected by Vladimir Putin, was arrested on June 17, 2026 (9). He is accused of ordering the assassination of his business partner, Alexander Paerrov, in 2020. According to Olga Romanova, an expert on the Russian prison world, "The message is addressed to all elites: the friendship of number one is not eternal." Kirill Rogov, an associate researcher at the Institute for Human Sciences (Vienna), confirms her analysis: "Putin, who is living in a period of instability at the moment, is worried about people who know elements of his past. These people had no reason to betray when he was powerful and stable." The first opponent of Vladimir Putin, Alexander Navalny, was threatened when he revealed information about the immense fortune of the Russian president, acquired in a suspicious way, and on his lifestyle closer to a mogul than to a man of the people, simple and patriotic. The message should be heard by Vladimir Putin's supporters in the West, who have benefited from his largesse. Their "protection" has become a threat. The star of the Kremlin's master has faded, and his "protégés" are in danger. A legacy of the USSR, particularly from the Stalinist era.

Seven gifts of Holy Spirit in Ukraine

Conversely, the image of Ukraine has shifted in its favor. It is no longer in a situation of "losing" and "defeated" in a foreseeable future, when everything seemed to have started very badly in 2022, after eight years of Russian undermining (since the annexation of Crimea in 2014). Saint Thomas d'Aquin made a list of the seven gifts of the Holy spirit of Pentecost: wisdom (which makes one taste the presence of God), intelligence (which helps to unravel the mystery of God), science (which makes one recognize the work of God), strength (which gives perseverance in effort), counsel (which gives spiritual discernment), piety (which brings into the hope of God), and fear (which makes understood the meaning of his greatness) (10). Ukrainians have been wise (patiently waiting for their time), intelligent (in negotiations with allies), scientific and strong (in the art of war). They have shown discernment (by attaching new allies), without losing hope (in their European future) while remaining humble (the war continues).

Ukraine has made undeniable progress since the beginning of 2026. The situation in Russia is very difficult for the population. Kiev's attacks on refineries have borne fruit – Ukrainian drone strikes on infrastructure since March 2026 have led to shortages at gas stations. The morale of the population is very affected. Vladimir Putin has recognized this. Ukrainian drones for three months have managed to "destabilize society," he said on June 23 in the Kremlin before graduates of military establishments "Such a massive campaign, with an incessant flow of drones, aims to create some uncertainty about the actions of our armed forces." On the night of June 17-18, Ukrainian drones hit the Kapotania refinery (near Moscow, 500 kilometers from the Ukrainian border); before the Russian capital, an oil port in St. Petersburg had been targeted (1,000 kilometers from Ukraine). Ukrainian objectives have been achieved – disrupting supply chains in a key sector of the economy, "purveyor of the Kremlin's war budget," but also "dampening Russian morale." The entire economy is affected - loss of refining capacity (the main industrial sector), disruptions in transport (major impact on businesses and individuals); crisis in agriculture. Global inflation is exploding, the Russian Central Bank has intervened.

These physical and symbolic defeats relayed on social media are victories in the psychological war led by Ukraine. The coup de grace is the new war in Crimea, which is increasingly isolated from Russia (12). The Ukrainian strategy is to take advantage of the major destabilization caused by their drone war to take the initiative, and gain the upper hand, over the Russian invader. Crimea was the most beautiful Russian trophy. Since May 2026, the Ukrainian armed forces have undertaken a campaign of strikes focused on military vehicles, fuel tankers, the Jankoy railway junction, and the bridges connecting Crimea to the mainland, triumphantly inaugurated by Vladimir Putin. The goal of the campaign is also to demilitarize the peninsula, depriving the Russian army of a launch pad for its drones....

G7 in Europe- the time of independence

The meeting of the members of the Group of 7 (G7) in Evian (Haute-Savoie, France) from 15 to 17 June 2026 was a "Ukraine moment". According to the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, "I feel like the tide is turning." For the president of the European Council, Antonio Costa, "This is a historic week for Ukraine." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed it: "This is a great moment for Ukraine" (13). As early as Monday, 15 June, accession negotiations between Ukraine and the European Union formally began; they had been opened in December 2023. Unanimously, since Viktor Orbán's electoral defeat in Hungary, the 27 have opened the first chapters on fundamental rights issues: independence of the judiciary (guaranteeing the rule of law), plurality of the media (information media that respect a code of ethics, opinion media clearly identified, regulation of all media by an independent authority), separation of powers (executive, judicial, legislative), fight against corruption (a major scourge of any democracy). This first political part is essential. Ukraine has been able to start receiving the 90 billion loan voted by the European Union and blocked so far by the pro-Russian Hungarian regime. Necessary to adapt to the dual democratic (fundamental rights) and economic transition (respect for the principles of a liberal economy), it is crucial for the 2026-2027 war effort. The EU has welcomed Ukraine's progress on the ground – their armed forces have blocked Russian advances and hit infrastructure. The EU has extended sectoral sanctions against Russia for a year, giving greater visibility to Ukrainians once subjected to Hungarian blackmail.

Another promising element of the state of grace in Ukraine is that the US president officially joined their cause on Wednesday, June 17, at the G7 after having stopped military aid in 2025 and conditioned his support on the acceptance by the Ukrainians of a peace agreement in favor of Russia. The Evian moment (France, June 2026) erases the Anchorage moment (Alaska, August 2025) when President Putin and his men imposed their conditions by excluding the Europeans from the negotiations. Like President Putin, who is unstable with his opinion, President Donald Trump is not reliable. He has shown his versatility and lack of word to his historical allies in the Middle East. In seeking to withdraw from NATO, the US president may be more open than his predecessor to Ukraine's membership in the Alliance. He understood that the Ukrainian defense, with its recognized expertise in drone warfare, had become essential to European defense. A "de facto" integration would be a first step according to a NATO diplomat by increasing cooperation with the Ukrainian army (14).

The summer of 2026 marks the return of Europe on the American and Russian agendas, with Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin forced to involve the Europeans in negotiations. The tide has turned thanks to Ukraine's intelligence, science, and strength, with the unwavering support of the often indecisive but reassured European Union. «*So say goodbye it's Independence Day*» can sing, with Bruce Springsteen, the Europeans and Ukraine to Russia. ***Slava Ukraini*** !-

- (1) Bruce Springsteen, « Independence day » written in 1977, published in his album “The river”, USA (1980)- <https://m.brucespringsteen.net/track/independence-day/>
- (2) References to the Bible - <https://hozana.org/bible/versets-bibliques/signification-nombres/7>
- (3) References to Koran- <https://www.ajib.fr/connaissiez-limportance-chiffre-7-coran/>
- (4) Franck Johannès « « Panthéon, l’émouvant hommage à Marc Bloch », Le Monde, jeudi 25 juin 2026
- (5) Marc Bloch (1940) « L’étrange défaite », collection folio histoire, Paris : Gallimard (édition 1990)
- (6) Editorial « Entendre l’avertissement de Marc Bloch contre les « étranges défaites », Le Monde, jeudi 25 juin 2026
- (7) « *Dilixit veritatem* », he cherished truth
- (8) Andreï Makine « La fille d’un héros de l’Union soviétique », Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1990-1995
- (9) Marie Jégo and Benjamin Quenelle « Les déboires d’Ilia Traber, le mafieux qui doit beaucoup à Poutine » , Le Monde, 25 juin 2026
- (10) Conference of France Bishops « Quels sont les sept dons de l’Esprit Saint», 16 mai 2018- <https://eglise.catholique.fr/approfondir-sa-foi/la-celebration-de-la-foi/les-grandes-fetes-chretiennes/la-pentecote/438333-sept-dons-de-lesprit-saint/>
- (11) Benjamin Quenelle « En Russie, la colère monte après les attaques de Kiev sur des raffineries », Le Monde, 26 juin 2026
- (12) Emmanuel Grynszpan, « Comment l’Ukraine isole la Crimée de la Russie » , Le Monde, 23 juin 2026
- (13) Sophie Faye, Philippe Jacqué et Virginie Malingre « Les Vingt-Sept se félicitent d’un moment spécial pour l’Ukraine », Le Monde , 20 juin 2026
- (14) Editorial « L’Ukraine fait évoluer la guerre à son profit », Le Monde, 20 juin 2026

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