



## Solidarity for Ukraine –issue 30- Memento mori

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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 issue is the 8th one for 2024 and the 29th since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.... Memories are not engraved in marble. Memory evolves, in the light of new elements that illuminate facts left in the shadows. Why do some external events receive a special echo? Sometimes we have deliberately or unconsciously repressed memories (for instance after an emotional shock),

other times we simply forgot them. In a first point we will mention the work of memory that must be constantly updated in the light of new tragic events; the testimonies of the protagonists are essential. In a second point we will see that memory and history do not go well together in Russia, where the official and idyllic history of the USSR deserves to be reviewed and corrected, this time in a fair way. In a third point, we will see that Ukraine, like many of the USSR's satellite countries, has been the victim of a brutal and violent history. A gap has widened between West and East; memories are wounded. In a final point we will see that western democracies, especially in Western Europe, must remember that they were lucky and that democracies are fragile. If they can be reborn, they can also disappear - *Memento mori*.

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\* logo designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

## *Je me souviens*

The book of the French writer George Perec « Je me souviens » is autobiographical. A France culture programme recalls that it “has become over time the symbol of both individual and collective memory”: It “restores the nostalgia of the Thirty Glorious”. According to George Perec these “I remember are not exactly memories, and certainly not personal memories, but small bits of everyday life, things that, in this or that year, all people of the same age have seen, lived, shared, and then disappeared, were forgotten; they were not worth memorizing, they did not deserve to be part of history, nor to appear in the memoirs of statesmen, mountaineers and sacred monsters. Yet it happens that they come back, a few years later, intact and tiny, by chance or because we have looked for them one evening with friends.” Perec encourages readers to recall their memories by writing them at the end of his book.

Memory is personal. Everyone has different memories of the same situation. Emotions allow the brain to remember certain facts, to engrave them. Their analysis, a posteriori, is more of reason, which allows facts that have happened to us to be better understood and analyzed especially when other events of the same order are repeated. The facts that have caused emotional shocks must be constantly confronted with an updated analysis to ensure that his memory does not “derail”. Words spoken, attitudes, resurfaced that had not been paid attention to. It is important to avoid dwelling on when memories (source of trauma) do not pass but it is essential to express your feelings or violent emotions to heal.

Disinformation consists in going back on facts by denying them, when they existed and are attested by witnesses who have lived through them, it is then a question of denial; or by relativising them by placing them arbitrarily on the same plane as other events that are not of the same order (relativism). The most popular conspiracy theories concern the Holocaust either by reproducing the revisionist theses (which negates it), or by putting into perspective the most tragic and unprecedented episode in human history.

This latent anti-Semitism prompted the French journalist, writer and filmmaker Claude Lanzmann to make a «monument film» in 1985 - Shoah registered by UNESCO in the International Register of “Memory of the World” (2). Faced with a resurgence of anti-Semitism, the public audiovisual, France Télévision, has passed on January 30, 2024 this original and very personal work (3). Claude Lanzmann’s approach was to interview survivors, but also former Nazis or witnesses of the time, peasants in villages near Sobibor whose neighbors were deported. The testimonies are eloquent and contradict the degrading presentation, manipulated by revisionists and negationists. No photos taken by the Nazis of the tortured and dehumanized bodies of the deportees are shown. The witnesses are the only protagonists, living testimonies.

## Fake memory in Russia and the USSR

In the American film «Total recall» (4), the main character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger is grafted memories he never had. Nature is well done, his body rejects this unnatural transplant- he makes a schizophrenic embolism and fails the experiment. Despite the official story told by Vladimir Putin, the USSR with its satellite countries reflects this reaction - the graft never took despite the Soviet terror.

In Budapest, in 1956, three years after the death of Stalin (in March 1953), the Hungarians demonstrate against the communist government (5). They are calling for the return of Imre Nagy, a moderate communist who was expelled from power in 1955. The Hungarian leaders did so, but declared martial law and asked the Soviet troops to help them restore order. The Red Army reacted first weakly and then firmly after Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. It invaded Budapest with eight divisions and several hundred tanks. The insurgents, students and employees, resist with heroism but are crushed. The crackdown is killing about 20,000 people and causing 160,000 refugees in western Europe. Imre Nagy is hanged.

In Prague in 1968, the accession on 5 January of Alexander Dubcek to the General Secretariat of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the subsequent election of General Lutvik Svoboda to the presidency of the Republic open the way to reforms (6). In April and May 1968, the Western youth revolted, Alexander Dubcek removed censorship, allowed travel abroad and arrested the chief of police. The Czechoslovakians discovered the West without being suspicious of the maneuvers of the Warsaw Pact. On 21 August 1968, armored troops (300,000 men) invaded Czechoslovakia at night on the decision of Leonid Brezhnev. Tens of thousands of paratroopers land at the airport in Prague. The «Prague Spring» and the illusion of a «socialism with a human face» lived. Dubcek and the other Czechoslovakian officials were replaced.

On 4 May 1989, in Warsaw, the Polish trade union Solidarnosc with Lech Wałęsa at its head and Bronisław Geremek as the grey eminence, organizes a demonstration that will be the culmination of a resistance begun in 1979 that will expand and rally Western opinion, with the decisive support of a Polish pope John Paul II. The democratic forces finally win against the USSR. The conflagration spread to East Germany, a showcase of the USSR, with the Berlin Wall falling in October 1989, under the gaze of a KGB agent stationed in the GDR, Vladimir Putin who will not stop repeating this story so traumatic for him.

The facts are stubborn, the citizens of satellite countries have never adhered to the official history of the USSR. The future has never sung. The heady song of repression and state lies was revived in 2000 with Russian propaganda and its long and patient work of disinformation (7) and oppression of its neighbors (8).

## Broken memory in Ukraine

After the Second World War, at the Yalta conference in February 1945, the victors shared Europe-the United States with Roosevelt, the UK with Churchill and the USSR with Stalin. Yalta is in Crimea, as an irony of history. The term “iron curtain” came up very quickly. It consecrated this shocking division of Europe - the western part, in the West, was able to benefit from economic aid from the United States (Marshall Plan) to rebuild. The eastern part, the countries of the East did not have this chance, and fell under the yoke of Soviet totalitarianism with as a corollary an exploitation and an economic disaster. They were never asked for their opinion, they did not consent to this subjugation.

Let’s consider a chronology. If the situation had been reversed, Poland would have an economic level of development equivalent to that of Germany or France, Romania that of Spain, or Bulgaria from Belgium. The institutions, thanks to an economic prosperity that allows major social advances, would be perfectly democratic. We would observe an exemplary pluralism of political parties, the press would be cited as an example with prizes rewarding the best investigative investigations, and enlightened, combative citizens would defend human rights, universalism and diversity. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) would give lessons in democracy to France, which despite a prestigious past as a homeland for human rights, would have gone wrong.

Western and Eastern Europeans had the same human capital (education systems with strong curricula and equivalent degrees) and the same social capital (networks of cultural, economic and educational exchanges since the Middle Ages.). But they did not receive the same capital (in cash ) or support. History has changed in Yalta. The gap has widened between the western and eastern parts of Europe. A second bad luck appeared in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and especially in 1991 with the implosion of the USSR. Some of the most advanced countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and geographically the most western ones, such as the Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech and Slovak republics) The European Union has a long tradition of cooperation with the US. It was a matter of time – first the democratic transition, then the economic transition (liberalism).

Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and other countries under Russian pressure were doubly abandoned: at Yalta and the fall of the wall. It is difficult to make democracy triumph when the afternoons are difficult after decades of economic, social and political disasters imposed by the Soviet diktat. Bad habits persist as corruption with the misappropriation of public funds essential for the development of the country.

## Memento mori

The Latin expression «memento mori» means "remember that you will die". Coming from medieval Christianity, the formula expresses the vanity of earthly life which induces an ethic of detachment, of asceticism. Memento mori are depicted in painting or sculpture as human skulls that are intended to inspire a meditation on death.

Before the accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (acquired in 2004) The European Union has since 2000 had a powerful arsenal to combat discrimination and promote diversity, which is a sine qua non of a democratic society (9). We know the sexist, racist, anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim, or homophobic tendencies that characterize many authoritarian regimes or extremist parties in Europe. Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption, is another essential aspect of a democracy so that citizens can defend their rights when they are violated.

Hungary has gone wrong by multiplying discriminatory drifts, and corruption. His allegiance to Putin's Russia or Xi's China was illustrated by the «official» trips of Victor Orban, whose country held the rotating presidency of the European Union (July 1, 2024). He will be called to order by the European Commission. Poland, with the reactionary party PIS from 2015 to 2023, has returned to democratic territory since the December elections, which saw the victory of Donald Tusk. Nothing is irremediable. Democracy can prevail over the far-right parties, all of which are backed by Russia. The European elections in June 2024, like the French parliamentary elections in July 2024, also showed that a republican front, a democratic sursaut, can prevail against obscurantism, hatred of the other, institutionalized violence and corruption, minds and leaders, extremist parties.

Democracy is a fragile thing. The moments of intense unrest are exhausting the population (after several years of Covid pandemic), anxious about its future, stunned by new anxigenic (global warming, explosive geopolitics). Democratic lassitude is taking hold. With the war in Ukraine, the EU and western democracies have understood that the rest of the world is not on their side. The EU was able to give an image of arrogance- teach a lesson, know better than others what was right, what was good, what had to be done. Even citizens committed to the democratic cause began to doubt – the little music of authority, moral order, figures of “saviors” The European Commission, which is a European Parliament, has been working on this subject since the beginning of the year (10).

To the European Union and western democracies, we would like to remind them before it is too late: *memento mori* ....

- (1) George Perec « Je me souviens », publié aux éditions Fayard en 1978 expliqué dans une émission de France culture-  
<https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/samedi-fiction/je-me-souviens-de-georges-perec-5505329>
- (2) Soirée consacrée le mardi 30 janvier 2024 au film de Claude Lanzmann trois jours après la journée européenne du 27 janvier consacrée à la mémoire des génocides et de la prévention des crimes contre l'humanité. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/27-janvier-journee-de-la-memoire-des-genocides-et-de-la-prevention-des-crimes-contre-l-humanite-11057>
- (3) Claude Lanzmann, « Shoah » (1985), <https://en.claude-lanzmann.com/>
- (4) Paul Verhoeven, « Total recall », 1990, Etats-Unis, d'après l'œuvre originale de : Philip K. Dick
- (5) « 23 octobre 1956 \_ Budapest se soulève au nom de la Liberté », André Larané, revue Hérodote- [https://www.herodote.net/23\\_octobre\\_1956-evenement-19561023.php](https://www.herodote.net/23_octobre_1956-evenement-19561023.php) publié le 27 novembre 2018- téléchargé le 15 février 2024
- (6) « 21 août 1968 - Invasion de la Tchécoslovaquie - revue Hérodote » - [https://www.herodote.net/21\\_aout\\_1968-evenement-19680821.php](https://www.herodote.net/21_aout_1968-evenement-19680821.php) téléchargé le 15 février 2024
- (7) Selon Alain Frachon qui cite Gideon Tachman du Financial Times, le nouveau manuel d'histoire des écoliers de Russie consacre la thèse selon laquelle l'élection présidentielle américaine de 2020 a été volée à Donald Trump, Le Monde, vendredi 16 février 2024
- (8) La Tchétchénie a été persécutée entre 2000 et 2008, la Géorgie a été attaquée en 2008 ; dernier avatar en 2024, la première ministre d'Estonie est officiellement recherchée par la police russe pour avoir « insulté l'histoire »- information parue dans Le Monde, 15 février 2024
- (9) Dispositif présenté sur le site de la Commission européenne - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/a-framework-strategy-for-non-discrimination-and-equal-opportunities-for-all.html>
- (10) Groupe Bolloré en France- CNews, Europe 1, Journal du Dimanche. CNews a été rappelé à l'ordre par le Conseil d'Etat le mardi 13 février 2024 qui a exigé de l'instance de régulation de l'audiovisuel l'Arcom de veiller à ce que le pluralisme soit respecté, à la demande de Reporters Sans frontières (RSF) qui avait saisi le Conseil d'Etat en considérant que la chaîne de télévision n'était plus une chaîne d'information mais d'opinion largement ouverte aux droites extrêmes

Newsletter written in February 2024, the day of the death of Alexander Navalny in an arctic penitentiary, updated on August 1, 2024

## Useful contacts

We mean to share the following contacts

- 1- National Union of Journalists of Ukraine- [HTTPS://NUJU.ORG.UA/](https://nuju.org.ua/)
- 2- Ukrainian Parish of Saint Volodymyr –Paris – [paroisse.st.volodymyr@gmail.com](mailto:paroisse.st.volodymyr@gmail.com)
- 3- 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/>

A list of associations & ONG - **Source** : <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/actualites/A15542>

**Support Ukraine** — <https://www.supportukraine.co/>

**Croix-Rouge Française** - **Croix-Rouge française** Redcross - <https://www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-internationale/Rechercher-un-programme/LA-CROIX-ROUGE-FRANCAISE-EN-UKRAINE>

**Médecins sans frontières** - emergency funds in countries bordering Ukraine and seeking to bring in medical equipment and personnel. - <https://soutenir.msf.fr/faire-un-don/~mon-don>

**Secours populaire** – a call for support .- <https://don.secourspopulaire.fr/ukraine/~mon-don>

**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 - - <https://dons.fondationdefrance.org/solidarite-avec-les-ukrainsiens/~mon-don?>

**Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés** - situation d'urgence de niveau 3 pour la crise en Ukraine, le plus élevé.: <https://donner.unhcr.org/fr/fr-fr/urgence-ukraine? cv=1>

**Unicef** - un besoin urgent de financement pour répondre aux besoins essentiels des enfants Pour faire un [don sur le site Unicef.fr](#) - <https://don.unicef.fr/b/mon-don?cid=322& cv=1>

**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 - .- <https://soutenir.carefrance.org/>

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

**association Solidarités International** –pour envoyer des convois de vivres et biens de première nécessité, distribuer de l'eau et des repas aux réfugiés - <https://dons.solidarites.org/b/mon-don?cid=880& cv=1>

**Plan International**, 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) - <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/) .- <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

**Les Banques alimentaires** - une [aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine](https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-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](https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.- <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

**Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF)** - elle mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. - <https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>