



Solidarity for Ukraine – 01/07/2022- issue 5 – about war in Europe

IN THIS ISSUE

Why this newsletter

Turmoil in orthodox Church

Religion & Soft power

Ambiguous Catholic Church

Unforgiven Past

Contacts utiles

The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24 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 5th issue after 4 previous issues since the 1st of March 2022. We will publish a new issue every first day of the month as long as this brutal, total and illegal war lasts. .

The war in Ukraine has underlined the importance of religion, and especially its instrumentalization by authoritarian regimes in the conflicts of the 21st century. Religion denounced as the “opium of the people” (Marx & Hegel “Critique of Philosophy of Law”, 1843), during the Soviet regime, was also used by the secret police who infiltrated both Orthodox and Catholic Churches in the countries belonging to the USSR influence. Religion has always been a weapon of «soft power» among authoritarian regimes. During World War II, the silence and attitude of Pope XII, who did not denounce the Nazi regime, was finally clearly analysed. Religious leaders have been implicit allies of the worst regimes in Europe forgetting the teachings of the fifth commandment, “*Thou shalt not kill*”.

- 1- Schism among orthodox Church – a collateral damage
- 2- Religion a weapon of « soft power »
- 3- Ambiguous Catholic Church in Ukraine and the Vatican II spirit
- 4- An unforgiven past – about war in Europe

* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Schism among the Orthodox Church- a collateral damage

The name of Russian Patriarch Cyril, a staunch ally of the Kremlin and inspired apostle of war, was removed *in extremis* in June 2022 from the blacklist of EU sanctions against personalities supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin in his war in Ukraine. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church has been making very bellicose statements since the beginning of the conflict (1). Only the opposition of Hungarian President, unconditional support for Russia in the EU, explains this withdrawal.

On May 27, 2022, the Ukrainian branch still loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate announced its breaking-up. It explained that the war in Ukraine was a violation of God's fifth command – “*Thou shalt not kill*”. According to Antoine Arjakovsky, a renowned expert on the Orthodox world (1), in less than three months 400 parishes have been placed under the tutelage of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which had already ended its dependence on Moscow in 2018.

On the religious front, Russia is in the process of losing a battle. The Ukrainian Orthodox contingent is the second largest in the world, with 25 million members.. It thus escapes the spiritual authority of the Russian patriarch. In Europe, an exasperation of the rebellion has been organized. «The parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate are preparing to defection», according to Antoine Arjakovsky. At the end of March 2022, the Church of Saint Nicholas of Myra in Amsterdam withdrew from Moscow's trusteeship. In Northern Italy, the parish of Udine decreed its annexation to Constantinople, its rector denounced «the monstrous indulgence» shown by Cyril to the Russian president against his Ukrainian brothers.

Faced to this outcry, the Russian Church counterattacked. In Lithuania, five priests were dismissed at the end of April 2022 after criticizing Cyril's actions in Ukraine, according to the *Baltic Times* (1). «Moscow will fight», predicts Antoine Arjakovsky, who evokes the «gigantic means», especially financial ones, at the disposal of the Russian patriarchate. In the occupied territories of Ukraine, parishes are under pressure. Every bishop must decide whether he supports the decision of his assembly or whether he retains the link with Moscow, explains Sergei Bortnik, belonging to the Department of External Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In the occupied «russified» regions, they do not have a choice.

A synod was held on the 7th of June 2022 in Moscow (2). The annexed dioceses of Crimea are now placed, at their request, under the direction of the Orthodox Church of Moscow and Cyril. Metropolitan Hilarion, responsible for external ecclesiastical affairs, left for Budapest to join the Russian support, Viktor Orban (who is not an Orthodox), the only leader to defend the Patriarch in the European Union Jean de Doubna, archbishop of the Orthodox churches of Russian tradition in Western Europe, implored the Russian patriarch in March to denounce a "monstrous and senseless war", but did not leave the Moscow patriarchate.

Religion, a weapon of « soft power »

Cyril defends a "theory of the Russian world" inspired by "19th and 20th century Slavophil philosophers and historians, revisited in a post-modernist style by personalities such as nationalist Alexander Douguine [the singer of an imperialist and Slavic Eurasia] or Alexander Shchipkov, deputy spokesman of the Moscow Patriarchate", according to Antoine Nivière, professor at the University of Lorraine, specialising in Cultural and Religious History of Russia (2). The reading of the book written by the American researcher in Politics Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations", greatly influenced Cyril and strengthened his vision of a radical opposition to Western World (3). The theory opposing a "Russian world" to an alleged "decadent" Western World resonates with Vladimir Putin's political strategy. For the historian Antoine Arjakovsky, this progressive radicalization is characteristic of a "prototype of *Homo Sovieticus*", passing from suffering to pride.

«Conservatism plays an important role in modern Russian political thought and is embodied as the official ideology of the United Russia Party» chaired by Vladimir Putin (4). It is a "traumatic reaction to liberalism" that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, a form of "apophatic geopolitics – a term derived from philosophical and theological vocabulary to think about what is not or should not be." This conservatism has been enriched by a denunciation of the "drift of the "woke" ideology, without ever explicitly naming it", denouncing a "decadent" Europe or prohibiting "homosexual propaganda" among minors through federal legislation. The same policy has been pursued in Hungary by Victor Orban.

Russia is posing as a «resistance without concessions» on sensitive and controversial social issues dividing the Western world. Russia's international strategy has been skilful and pragmatic in adapting to the profiles and needs of the targeted populations and governments (4). Among the Orthodox populations, Russia did not hesitate to praise the prestige of Cyril I, Metropolitan of Moscow and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. On the domestic level, the Church is a state institution, a main stakeholder in governance. Even though the state is secular, orthodoxy has become an official religion since a 1997 law on freedom of conscience.

Religious belonging is used as an implicit adhesion among members of the Russophile diaspora, from the post-Soviet space. In Paris, the Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center inaugurated in 2016 is an investment commensurate with the Russian ambition (170 million euros were spent for its building). Like China with the Confucius Institutes, Russia has gradually reconstituted its network of Pushkin institutes, which combine a cultural and religious instruction, unlike other institutes (French, Italian or German) that are limited to a linguistic and cultural approach.

The profile of Cyril, born Vladimir Mikhaylovich Gundiaiev in 1946 in Leningrad in a very religious family is interesting. His parents were interned in a Kolyma camp during the Stalinist

"Great Terror" of the 1930s. After studying theology, the young Vladimir who would become Cyril joined the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the World Council of Geneva (Switzerland). His official biography fails to mention that he also worked as an agent of the KGB, under the code name "Mikhailov". «It was common for cassocks to hide the eye of Moscow» (2).

A film directed by Slovak director Ivan Ostrochovský “The Servants” (*Sluzobníci*) (2020) explained the way the countries belonging to the Warsaw Pact infiltrated the churches (Catholic for Czechoslovakia or Poland) which were considered as subversive. The strategy could go as far as the murder of refractory priests, or pushing young seminarians (servants) to commit suicide when they were reluctant to enlist. The film explains the infiltration of the Czechoslovak Catholic Church by the *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) movement, which collaborated from 1971 to the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 with the communist regime and its threatening secret police, StB (5). The Slovak director said he did not make a film against the Catholic Church but wanted to show the mechanisms that could lead to active or passive collaboration with an authoritarian regime.

Ambiguous catholic Church and the spirit of Vatican II

Since the beginning of the conflict, Pope Francis has delivered an ambiguous speech about the war in Ukraine (6). In an interview given to the Italian daily newspaper *Il Corriere della Serra* (May 3, 2022) the Pope did not answer the question asked to him -whether it was fair to provide Ukraine with weapons to defend itself against Russia. Pope Francis is opposed to any kind of war and has multiplied the calls for the cessation of fighting. He doesn't want to directly incriminate Russian President and acknowledge Russia's responsibility. In particular, he criticised the role of NATO, whose «barking at Russia's gates» would have prompted the Russian president to take military action; responding to a provocation by the Allies (6).

This papal position seems to place the two belligerents on the same level, the assaulted would be as responsible as the aggressor. The videoconference organized by Pope Francis on March 16, 2022 with Cyril was surprising. Pope Francis finally abandoned the surprising idea , for Easter, to organize a joint meditation between a Ukrainian and a Russian woman, who would have wounded Ukrainian Catholics, victims of Russian aggression, but also all Ukrainians (6).

Pope Francis refers to Vatican II (1962-1965) which took note of the new weapons of mass destruction (nuclear arsenal) and the threat posed by the arms race (Cuban missile crisis in 1963). However, his conception is more radical than his predecessors. Pope John Paul II considered nuclear deterrence “morally acceptable” as “a step on the road to disarmament” in 1982, in the midst of the Euromissile crisis. The accusations made by Pope Francis reflect a «very Latin American distrust towards the United States», NATO being for him inspired by Americans (6).

Pope John Paul II placed his pontificate under the sign of resistance, and even fight, against the USSR. In particular, he took up the cause of the (secular) Solidarność trade union in its struggle against the pro-Soviet regime of General Wojciech Witold Jaruzelski. The victory of Solidarność in May 1989 paved the way for the end of the USSR- the first step symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall (in November 1989).

Since Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican's strategy towards the Slavic world has changed (6). After the fall of the Berlin wall, the policy has indeed changed.. Slavic countries are once again perceived as «a conservatory for Christian values». The Church is no longer the vector of resistance it used to be under the Soviet Union. It has returned to a more conservative, sometimes reactionary, conception of religion. It is back, in many Slavic and non-Slavic countries, to the “opium of the people” denounced by Karl Marx in the 19th century when the Church had supported monarchies opposing Republican ideas willing to return to a feudal order, *Ancien Régime* in France.

Pope Francis' “ecumenical voluntarism” has been a constant in his policy (6). He met with Cyril in Cuba in 2016, despite Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. A chill finally set in after Francis called Cyril “Putin's altar boy.” The Russian patriarch regretted an “inappropriate” tone and a scheduled meeting between the two religious leaders was postponed *sine die*. Pope Francis nevertheless offered to meet Russian president who has not yet responded to his invitation (7).

An unforgiving past (8) – about war in Europe

The war in Ukraine reminds many Europeans of World War II. Vladimir Putin has not only instrumentalized religion, he also keeps on rewriting the history of Russia and the Soviet Empire to his advantage. The USSR would have been the great victor in the struggle against Nazism, forgetting to mention the German-Soviet Pact that opened the conflict (1939-1941). The lessons of a tragic past for Europe should make us reflect.

An article published in the American newspaper *New York Times* (31st of May 2022) sheds light on the responsibility of Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church during the World War II. An American researcher, David Kertzer, professor at the Brown University and administrator at the American Academy in Rome, has been working with Italian colleagues for many years on the hidden history of the Vatican. His work was awarded by a Pulitzer Prize in 2015 (9).

Pope Francis opened the archives of Pope Pius XII in 2019 by declaring that «the Church is not afraid of its history». David Kertzer, in his last book published in 2022, examined the role of the Catholic Church during World War II and the Holocaust, a founding element for the American scholar but also for the European construction. The European Union is a project of reconciliation

and redemption. It was built so that such a tragedy, unprecedented in the history of humanity, could not be repeated.

The American researcher documented the consequences of Pope Pius XII's personal decision to remain silent on Hitler's genocide. His silence had an essential impact on the course of the war, and on the Nazi project of extermination of the Jewish community. His moral influence would have had a decisive impact on the attitude of many Catholics, but also beyond the Catholic community. This responsibility of Pope Pius XII has long been underestimated.

By anticommunism, Pope Pius XII considered that the Axis (composed of the support of the Nazi regime) would win the war. He meant to firstly protect the interests of the Church so as not to offend Hitler and Mussolini. The Pope declared he had in mind to protect the millions of German Catholics who would have been threatened. Mr. Kertzer's book reveals the influence of a German prince, a fervent Nazi, who played the secret intermediary between Pius XII and Hitler. The Pope's chief adviser in the Vatican on Jewish issues urged him not to protest a fascist order to arrest and send the Jews of Italy to concentration camps.

According to the defenders of Pius XII, who are instructing his canonization process, the Pope would act in the shadows to protect the Jewish community; all charges against him would be defamatory. The same rhetoric has been used for years in France by revisionists, such as the lawyers of Philippe Pétain who invented a storytelling during his trial. The General de Gaulle (in London) was the sword and Philippel Pétain (in Vichy), was the shield. Their arguments are contradicted by an overwhelming reality. Philippe Pétain was beaten with national indignity, sentenced to the confiscation of his property and to a death penalty. This last sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by General de Gaulle only because of his great age.

On the 30th of May 2022, Italian-Slovenian writer Boris Pahor died in Trieste at the age of 108. He published in 1967 in Slovenian his major work «*Nekropola*» (11). He testified about his concentration camp experience after Italian writer Primo Levi in his book “*If it is a man*” published in 1958 (12) or Hungarian writer Imre Kertész in “*Being without destiny*” published in 1975. (13). In “*Difficult Spring*” (14) Boris Pahor writes, “Wandering necropolis of zebra bodies, standing so tightly together that it was very difficult for them to slide on the ground when they stopped breathing. Caravan of death that could not compare to any other journey».

At the Vatican II Council, the Catholic Church recognized its responsibility in the Shoah, which was not only that of a Pope, but that of a Catholic education that has denigrated Judaism and has persecuted the Jewish community for centuries. A series of four documentaries broadcasted on Arte (French/German TV) in April 2022 “*History of Anti-Semitism*” (15) based on the work of many researchers – historians, theologians, specialists in Islam, psychoanalyst, anthropologist...–

have documented two millennia of anti-Semitism. The fact is overwhelming, as history repeats itself.

The President of Yad Vashem, the Shoah Memorial in Jerusalem, Dr. Dani Dayan, had a private audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican on June 9, 2022. They recalled the importance of Holocaust research in the Christian world, and of strengthening the collaboration between Yad Vashem and the Vatican in the fields of Holocaust remembrance, education and documentation, and thus join their efforts to combat anti-Semitism and racism in the world (16).

Vladimir Putin forgets an important chapter in Russian history: the hoax staged by the secret services of the Tsar «*The Protocol of the Elders of Zion*», the most well-known and widely disseminated anti-Semitic publication of the modern ages (17). Quoted by the Nazi regime, it still serves today as the basis for conspiracy theories that have developed on social networks, especially spread by alt-right white supremacist circles.

The «*Pravda*» was the instrument of Soviet propaganda, the official newspaper of the communist party. The word “*pravda*” means “truth” in Russian - it has always been sorely tested by Russian leaders, whether during tsarist, Soviet times or even today during the war in Ukraine. It is to forget the teachings of the Eighth Commandment, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*”

- (1) Philippine de Clermont Tonnerre « Le schisme orthodoxe est maintenant avec Moscou », Journal du dimanche, 5th of June 2022
- (2) Fabien Magnenou , « Russie : qui est Cyrille, le chef de l'Eglise orthodoxe et apôtre de la guerre en Ukraine ? » ,France Télévisions , 14/06/2022
- (3) Samuel Huntington (1996) “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”
- (4) Guillaume Blanc, a student of the French School of Economic War , « Etat des lieux du soft power russe », Paris, Ecole de guerre économique – 27 Octobre'21 - <https://www.ege.fr/infoguerre/etat-des-lieux-du-soft-power-russe>
- (5) Malik Berkati « Les Séminaristes (Sluzobníci ; Servants) du Slovaque Ivan Ostrochovský – Un très bel objet cinématographique » - *J:Mag- Lifestyle and Citizenship* – 7th of June 2021 - <https://j-mag.ch/les-seminaristes-sluzobnici-servants-du-slovaque-ivan-ostrochovsky-un-tres-bel-objet-cinematographique/>
- (6) Cécile Chambraud, “Les ambiguïtés du pape sur la guerre en Ukraine », Le Monde, 13/05/2022
- (7) Article written on the 14th of June 2022
- (8) A reference is made to the French past during WWII- Éric Conan, Henry Rousso, (2013) “Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas », Paris : Fayard
- (9) Jason Horowitz, « Deep in Vatican Archives, Scholar Discovers ‘Flabbergasting’ Secrets”, New York Times, 31 May 2022
- (10) David I. Kertzer “ The Pope at War: The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini, and Hitler Hardcover – June 7, 2022
- (11) Boris Pahor (1996) “Pélerin parmi les ombres », Paris : La Table ronde
- (12) Primo Levi (1958 & 1976 », « S Levi, Primo (1958 & 1976) « Se questo è un uomo », Turin: Giulio Einaudi
- (13) Imre Kertész (1998) « Être sans destin » , Arles : Actes Sud ; édition originale en hongrois en 1975
- (14) Boris Pahor (1995) « Printemps difficile », Paris : Phébus, publication originale en slovène en 1958
- (15) Jonathan Hayoun, Laurent Jaoui et Judith Cohen « Histoire de l’antisémitisme », Arte (France, 2022, 4 x 52 min), diffusé le mardi 12 avril 2022
- (16) Newsletter of Yad Vashem - 13 June 2022 - https://www.yadvashem.org/events/09-june-2022.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Pope
- (17) Protocol of the Elders of Zion, according to the U.S. State Department’s “Report on Global Anti-Semitism” (2004), “The Protocols are intended only to incite hatred against Jews and Israel.” In the United States and Europe, neo-Nazis, white supremacists and negationists endorsed and circulated the Protocols. In the Arab and Islamic world, many school books present the Protocols as a fact - <https://encyclopedia.usmmm.org/content/fr/article/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion> (7 June 2022)

Contacts utiles

Pour aider l'Ukraine, voici une liste d'associations & ONG publiées sur le 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>