



Solidarity for Ukraine – 01/09/2023- issue 19 – Sorcerer’s apprentices

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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 9th for 2023 and the 19th since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. « False brothers », « false pretences». There are many expressions to describe ambiguous situations, or intentionally intended to deceive, to “make bladders look like lanterns”. Since the 12th century, it means that an «idiot» can take dried and inflated pork bladders for real lamps, the shape is identical. Advertising in the 20th century speaks of

the “Canada dry” effect, a soda that has the appearance and taste of alcohol and can easily abuse the naive, the “absolute beginners” (1). The “Goodfellas” (2) are not taken in, they know the music. Yet, sometimes, because of too much trust, they are the “dummies”. The violent death of Yevgeny Prigozhin on Wednesday 23rd of August 2023 is a meaningful illustration. We will evoke a literary reference, borrowed from Oscar Wilde, who was able to describe with a biting irony the torments of the human soul in an original book, less classical than it appears «The portrait of Dorian Gray» (3). We will mention the rather caricatural distribution of roles in the Russian war against Ukraine between a Russian «false gentle» and an Ukrainian «false villain». We will conclude by questioning the risky strategy of sorcerer’s apprentices.

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* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Dorian Gray syndrome

The Irish writer Oscar Wilde described in one of his most famous novels «The portrait of Dorian Gray» a strange phenomenon: the hero always remains of perfect beauty, without his turpitudes ever distorting an angel figure, to «make a saint damned», who would be given “God without confession”. Only his portrait painted by his friend Basil Hallward bears the stigmata of his tormented life which does not escape an attentive spectator, an evil and tempting figure, Lord Henry Wotton, who patiently waits for his hour.

Appearances are sometimes misleading. It is normal to want to test the sincerity and the real strength of the commitments of some people who speak in public, passionate and eloquent but who in private do not conform to their image and prove to be of perfect cynicism, or of some self-serving opportunism. “Give it to me, you’ll get the song”. They know very conveniently “turn around”, their jacket easily turns around. Like weathervanes, they are sensitive, and skilfully follow the direction of the wind. We could boast about their agility, their great flexibility or adaptability. But it ends up grinding teeth. They are frauds easily buyable.

One strategy is therefore to send emissaries to test the faith of “subjects of study” apparently well intentioned: is it real or fake? Are they angels or demons? A battery of tests is needed that is used over several years with different protagonists, who present themselves as «friends» to get closer to the research subject, closer and closer. No domain, however intimate, escapes their sagacity. One is never too cautious. But friendship is not to be decreed, it is tested, it is built, it is implied by very concrete attitudes and facts. The devil is in the details.

If the subjects of study become more and more refractory, after several disappointing experiences with different emissaries, obviously unfriendly, should we deduce from their nervousness, sometimes from their anger, that they are vain beings, antisocial, detestable, full of themselves and aggressive? Would we be dealing with «Dorian Gray» characters in power who display a sociable character, sometimes even sympathetic, only to serve their interests? Are they obnoxious manipulators?

Another hypothesis is that their ability to observe and their sensitivity to others has probably been underestimated. They did not believe in the wonderful storytelling of friendship, the supposed benevolence of emissaries who literally fell from the sky, they didn’t feel they were well-inspired. Dorian Gray’s syndrome is then reversed: the «research subjects» do not recognize themselves in the deformed and grotesque portrait that is presented to them. Their attitude is not explained by an antisocial and intransigent character but by a requirement in human relationships which must not be based precisely on a masquerade, a crude manipulation of feelings, a rather pathetic manipulation. The human soul deserves better than false friends, false brothers, and all false pretences. It demands height and sincerity especially in troubled times; it deserves true and genuine feelings and involvement.

Valdimir Vladimirovich Putin, the « false-gentle»

The war in Ukraine again provides a valuable field of analysis as human situations and behaviour, especially on the Russian side, are caricatured. From the beginning of the conflict, various psychological profiles of the man in the Kremlin have appeared in the media-his neuroses, his obsessions, his frustrations... But the most interesting is the profile cleverly constructed by its advisors, inspired by a very naive psychology. We were spared one area: the intimate life of the Russian president. We only know that he was married a first time, and that he had two daughters. His new wife or companion is young and would be a high-level athlete; they would have a child. New responsibilities, new ambitions, new partner. The KGB spy has become a world star, with a woman of his size. We also know his daily ritual- he gets up late, does exercise to be faithful to his legend of a simple and healthy man, «*mens sana in corpore sano*» and that he does not surf the Internet. He would therefore not suffer from the ill of the century by consulting too much the media, and in particular those called «social». As a man of his generation, he prefers to consult the notes prepared in an initial by his «services» who take care not to upset him.

Vladimir Putin wants to give the image of a «good father» who watches Russian television, who delights him. State media, «voice of its master», it does not stop praising the great man of Moscow, who competes only with the Romanov dynasty. It consoles the annoyances of international news. Television propaganda is a powerful elixir. Cleverly staged, it uses sarcasms, and often insults, against favourite enemies - the Ukrainian president but also all western countries, including the United States and the European Union. The «TV minions» spare no effort to be the most hateful against the «designated targets» of their «hero», the cause of all the evils of Russia. When the great man wants to meet his «adored» people, great shows impeccably orchestrated and massively broadcast, praise the glory of the man of the people who, despite his great humility and self-sacrifice, thought himself obliged to attack Ukraine and the whole West so menacing. He did not choose, he was called, and did not count his time and energy.

How could the «false gentile» explain the release of his faithful servant Yevgeny Prigozhin in June 2023, supported by a clan of ultra-nationalists in Moscow (4)? Well-behaved men who have displeased and disappeared are legion in the personal history of Vladimir Vladimirovich. The militia leader Wagner, who had become a master of propaganda (5), learned the hard way. He disappeared in the sky on Wednesday, August 23, 2023 with his faithful lieutenants, two months after the vexation inflicted on his «protector» who did not forgive. Yevgeny Prigozhin thought he was indispensable. His brutality is illustrated by the many videos posted by his troops on the web, in particular the horrific ones showing the torture inflicted on a Syrian soldier, who had joined their ranks, beaten to death and mutilated and whose atrocious video had circulated on social networks (6)- did not impress the Russian President who was waiting for his time. His vengeance was measured by the public and international humiliation of the failed mutiny. The «false nice guy» showed his true face.

Volodymir Zelenski, the « false villain »

The psychology of the Ukrainian president has been subjected to much more crude or even erroneous analyses. Russian specialists, however «master minds» in psychology and probably in behavioural sciences, have missed their subject. It's even quite surprising that they missed so much of the personality of a man who never hid his game. The profile is classic- an honest man caught in a maelstrom that certainly surpassed him, and surely destabilized him, but which he knew how to make the most of. The first three years (2019-2022) experts in psychology, psychiatry, and other cognitive sciences, who floated as much in the West as in the East, had to work on the resources available to them. The biography of a well-raised boy, of good family, who built a successful career in audiovisual with long-time friends, met during his studies and with the support of an intelligent woman whom he also knew at university. He had talent, willpower, a lot of energy and perseverance, and an obvious intelligence. His career did not fall from the sky, he built it by his work; he fully deserved his success. When the opportunity to serve his country arose, he did not hesitate. He put his notoriety at the service of a mission - preparing “bright futures” for Ukraine but this time without the false notes of the past – a distance with Russia and a future partnership with the European Union and NATO countries for its protection.

It was then that President Volodymyr Zelensky began to displease, to disturb Moscow. It was expected that he would adopt a low profile, that he would be easily corruptible, predictable like so many other Ukrainian leaders before him, that he would be easily manipulated. He didn't fit the profile that was built for him. He disappointed. He should have bitten the dust. The intelligence services began to resent, and even to get seriously impatient. But who was this “pretty” boy who thought he was someone else? Who did he think he was? Did he even understand who he was talking to? We had to refresh his memory, teach him the «good» manners. He did not fully understand who was distributing the cards, that he was just a pawn in a game that overtook him. Since he did not understand the insidious influence of the emissaries sent in the first three years, he went to see how the real «professionals» heated themselves, at his own peril.

The consternation of the Kremlin's «master minds» was total when they found that the strong way did not work. Not only did the Ukrainian president continue to understand nothing, but he also turned against his attackers and questioned them. Worse he had even found allies, probably abused by their passionate hatred for Russia. The more the blows rained, the more precise the threat became, the more the Ukrainian president regained his strength. It was incomprehensible, unthinkable- how did the bludgeoning not make Volodymir Zelensky falter? Why did he not give in? The Russian psychologists omitted a very simple explanation: Russian psychologists omitted a very simple explanation: they were blinded by the caricature and stereotypes they had developed for years about the Ukrainian president. Psychological traits were present but distorted; their portrait was a monster they have created.

The risky strategy of the sorcerer's apprentice

Psychology and psychiatry, like cognitive sciences, do wonders. They have allowed spectacular advances in the knowledge of the soul and human behaviour. They help to resolve tragic personal situations, but also to resolve conflicts to save considerable human losses. They have often saved lives. Mistrust and prudence can be explained. But shenanigans end up wearying when they are unfounded and seem only intended to trap or impose a point of view, and working hypotheses, questionable. Intent is paramount in any human endeavour. If people are well-inspired, benevolent, believe and trust in others, the most problematic situations suddenly become clear. All parties win in this spirit of benevolence. Intelligence prevails. If one of the parts distorts the game, orients the game, turns his interlocutor by low shots, the outcome is lost in advance. The break is inevitable.

The story of the sorcerer's apprentice, put in poem by Goethe (6) who was popularized by Walt Disney's cartoon of (7) is known. A lazy young sorcerer's apprentice tries to animate a broom to do his work for him: fill a basin with water by taking buckets and emptying them. His manoeuvre allowed him to spare him all the way to go, a task that his master, who had left to make a race, assigned him. At first, the broom does the job perfectly. But it does not stop once the basin is filled. The water overflows and floods the master's house. The young apprentice, who forgot the magic formula to stop the broom, decides to cut it in half with an axe. Quickly, the two pieces come alive and get back to work. The master finally arrives; repairing the damage caused by the apprentice, he is out of control, while remaining calm. The moral of this story is that often disasters are caused by pseudo-specialists who acted with lightness or amateurism. They feed conflicts out of ignorance, over-confidence, or a very questionable feeling of being the strongest, sometimes by their own prejudices and stereotypes that blind them. They refuse to admit that they were wrong. The strangest thing is that the «master-sorcerers» let them punish for years without reacting and taking things in hand, before it is too late.

In conflictual situations, if everyone stands by their positions and especially if those who have taken the initiative to trigger hostilities do not acknowledge their mistakes, the tension becomes an increasingly open conflict that ends in a rupture without possibility of return. However, the ball is in the “detractors” court so that the “singing tomorrow”, very illusory in the Russian or Soviet propaganda of yesteryear, does not become disillusioned and turn into a real cacophony before a great silence. No one wins at the decay of the situation.

In the Russian war against Ukraine, the sorcerer's apprentice is on the Russian side; Volodymyr Zelensky has proven since February 2022 that he had become a «sorcerer-master», and even a real «mastermind», no more an «absolute beginner».

- (1) David Bowie, « Absolute beginners », March 1986 ;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_cHvtPB2dY
- (2) Martin Scorsese « The goodfellas », USA, 1990 ; film on gangsters called « goodfellas », as opposed to honest people called with diverse name, always in a mocking way
- (3) Oscar Wilde(1890) « Le portrait de Dorian Gray », London: Lippincott's Monthly Magazine
- (4) Nicolas Ruisseau « L'armée russe toujours sous le coup de la rébellion des Wagner », Le Monde, 21 juillet 2023.
- (5) Like in his movie "Tourist" that he produced in 2021 for the worldwide opinion, especially the African one
- (6) Benoît Bringer (2023) « Wagner, les mercenaires de la Russie », French documentary broadcasted on Arte - <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/105564-000-A/wagner-les-mercenaires-de-la-russie-1-2/>
- (7) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe “Der Zauberlehrling”, Francfort an Main, 1797
- (8) Walt Disney, « Sorcerer's apprentice”, USA, 1940-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELC1vzm0NXE>

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