



Solidarity Ukraine – issue 35- Blue Hour

IN THIS ISSUE

Blue colour

Peur bleue in Russia

Blues in Ukraine

Blue Hour in Europe

Useful contacts

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 not peripheral, it is existential for the European Union and its influence in the world. This newsletter is the first published in 2025 and the 35th since the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The blue colour is associated with the European flag and its 12 golden stars. The star banner symbolizes identity and unity, the ideals of solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe. The future of the European Union is closely linked to that of Ukraine, attacked by Russia in 2014 (during the

Maidan Revolution). The Ukrainians were denied by Russia to join the European Union, which was painstakingly rebuilt after the Second World War. The year 2025 may be a turning point in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict after three long years of heroic resistance by Ukrainians. Russia is weakened by an unexpected and unpredictable international geopolitical situation; it turned abruptly in December 2024 with the fall of the Syrian regime allied to Vladimir Putin. Ukrainians are uncertain about the support of the West, waiting for a necessary ceasefire and dependent on the resistance of its allies within NATO. For 2025, there are some points of light - a Blue Hour in Europe. The Polish presidency starting in January may bring a Solidarnosc spirit for Ukraine, that means the end of the Russian/Soviet threat for Ukraine...

- 1- Blue colour
- 2- « Peur bleue » in Russia
- 3- Blues for Ukrainians
- 4- Blue Hour in Europe

* the logo was designed for Caritas Canada in February 2022

Blue colour

According to the French historian and anthropologist Michel Pastoureau, since there were opinion polls at the end of the 19th century, blue was the preferred colour everywhere in the West “in France as well as in Sicily, in the United States as in New Zealand” (1). Its success is unanimous among men and women, regardless of social or professional background. It has become the fetish colour of western civilization. With a few exceptions. Pharaonic Egypt considered blue as a lucky charm in the afterlife; many blue-green objects were left in the tombs of the pharaohs. The sapphire, deep blue, is also the favorite stone of the people of the Bible. At first absent from the Catholic cult, the 12th and 13th centuries have rehabilitated and promoted blue; it is divinized and appears in the stained glass of cathedrals (the famous blue Chartres). The Marian cult is at its peak in the Medieval times. The Virgin Mary dwells in heaven, she is clothed with a blue cloak and robe. She becomes the “Principal Promotion Agent” of Blue. She is crowned with 12 stars on the day of the Assumption (celebrated on 15 August by Catholics).

Some have claimed that the European flag refers to the Christian origins of Europe. However, as Michel Pastoureau recalls, blue has mainly helped to reflect the diversity of medieval society in times when «family names, coats of arms and insignia appear». The traditional three colors (white, red, black) were no longer enough. Diversity is also the motto of the European Union – “*In varietate concordia*” (“United in diversity”) since 2000. The Europeans have decided to act together “for peace, the defense of common values and prosperity, while respecting and enriching their different cultures, traditions and languages” (2) and all religions in Europe that followed or preceded Christianity (Judaism, Islam...). The most decisive enlargement of 2004 with the accession of ten new member countries (3) allowed satellite countries of the USSR to free themselves from the Soviet yoke- group of Visegrad (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) and Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). It has enriched Europe’s diversity.

In the film directed and co-written by Polish director Krzysztof Kieślowski (4), blue is associated with freedom and randomness. It is the first of a cycle - “Blue”, “White” and “Red”, the three colours of the French flag that are associated with republican values - “Freedom”, “Equality”, “Brotherhood”. The first film, «Blue» evokes the turbulence of life, the fate that often seems to escape us and gives us the impression of not deciding anything (4). The heroine lost her husband and daughter in a car accident. Her world is falling apart. She loses her footing (blue pool scenes) but finally gives the decisive kick and resumes life.

In Europe, freedom was the cornerstone of post-war reconstruction. The long struggle of the Ukrainians against the Russian threat since 2014 is a clear proof that this cardinal value of the European Union still animates convinced Europeans.

« Peur bleue » in Russia

Vladimir Putin presented himself as a war leader confident and uncompromising at his annual press conference on Thursday, 19 December 2024 (5). He does not evoke any truce or hope of peace despite the election of a new American president, Donald Trump, who is standing as a man of peace. The Kremlin has intensified its hybrid war. It takes two forms: actions on the ground and a campaign of incendiary disinformation (6). Sabotage has multiplied in the Baltic Sea with underwater cables allowing the western Internet to function severed. Energy price inflation was not enough, the Internet is another way to make Europeans tired of a war they do not see the outcome. The disinformation has resumed. The Russian expert in strategic thinking, Serguei Karaganov, gave an interview to the French newspaper Le Figaro where he threatened: «Deterrence no longer works, we must reintroduce fear» (7). According to him, “the objective of Russia’s policy is to lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons and to block the path to a major nuclear war”. Nuclear weapons have been brandished by Putin since the beginning of the war, including against non-nuclear powers that support the Ukrainians. The European Union is accused of preparing a third world war. Konstantin Malofeev, an influential oligarch close to President Putin, responded to Donald Trump by saying that he has appointed General Keith Kellog as special envoy for Ukraine: “He will be told to go f... himself”.

The facade is offensive, yet the Kremlin has reason to be worried. An explosive device killed the commander of the Russian X-ray, chemical and biological defense forces, Igor Kirillov, in Moscow on 17 December 2024 (8). He is the highest-ranking Russian officer murdered outside of the war theatre since the beginning of the Russian invasion. The attack has not been claimed but it is probably a targeted assassination of the Ukrainian intelligence services. Much more embarrassing, the military and political setback of Moscow in Syria is a threat (9). The Russian planes could not prevent the inexorable advance of the rebel troops. From the north-west of the country, they gained in a few days Damascus and toppled the regime of Bashar al Assad in December 2024. In 2015, Russia’s military support allowed its Syrian ally to regain control of the country. In 2024, several Russian military bases on Syrian territory are threatened by rebel forces. For Tatiana Kastoueva-Jean, who heads the Russia-Eurasia Centre of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), “What is happening in Russia is a regional strategic setback and humiliation for Russia. A failure for his army but also for his intelligence services” (9). No one had anticipated such a rapid fall of the Syrian regime in the Western camp. Italy and Austria even approached Damascus to open negotiations. Now, Moscow is no longer the master of the game in Syria. Hope can be reborn in Ukraine, Damascus would be the first failure of a long series for Russia.

Blues for Ukrainians

Geopolitics are capricious. Things can change very quickly. President Zelensky had every reason to be concerned about the election of a new American president who decided to end the war in Ukraine “within 24 hours”. He knows the exhaustion of his troops and the lassitude of his population after three years of total and merciless war of Russia. Ukraine is ready to open negotiations but not at any price. If it is to make territorial concessions, it must receive security guarantees in return. The threat of a total invasion of its territory by Russia is real. The only alternative is to protect the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This has divided Europeans since 2008 (6). The risk of escalation is feared by many Westerners. The countries closest to Russia are most convinced of NATO’s role (Central Europe and Scandinavia) and want other countries already threatened or attacked by Russia to join as soon as possible.

For the Finnish president Alexander Stubb, the alternative to Europe is “either the Yalta moment or the Helsinki moment”. Since the 1975 Helsinki agreements, reinforced in 1992 by the Paris agreements which created the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), security in Europe has been organized. The Yalta conference belongs to the past; it saw the great powers (USA, UK and USSR) share their spheres of influence in Europe with the creation of an iron curtain separating the western bloc from the eastern bloc, satellite countries of the USSR. The spirit of Helsinki is based on three pillars “independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty”. Each country has the right and freedom to decide which organization it wishes to belong to. President Stubb fears a “finlandization” of Ukraine that would consist as Stalin with Finland to leave Ukraine its independence while amputating its territory (occupied since 2014 by Russia) and part of its sovereignty (the prohibition of free membership in the European Union or NATO, *casus belli* for Russia). For Alexander Stubb, arming Ukraine and welcoming it as a member of the EU and NATO are the only possible and necessary guarantees of security. “The Russians never negotiate in good faith and their ultimate goal has not changed: they always want to change its current regime; they still want to acquire the four oblasts and Crimea.” Even before the fall of the Syrian regime, the Finnish president believes that Russia is weakened and isolated on the international scene.

Mark Rutte, former Dutch prime minister and new NATO secretary general, is more nuanced: «At the summit in Washington (in July 2024) we agreed on an irreversible path (from Kiev) to NATO». Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna is more aware of the Russian threat “the question is not whether or not to give an invitation to Ukraine, because it is already on the table, but how today to push Putin to change his goals of war, which are (...) the destruction of Ukraine and its government”. It all depends on a ceasefire negotiated between the belligerents. In this case, the most willing countries (France, United Kingdom, Baltic and Scandinavian countries) would deploy their troops on Ukrainian soil to enforce the ceasefire.

Blue Hour in Europe

The American presidency led by the Democrat party has been a strong supporter of President Zelensky and the Ukrainian people since the start of the Russian offensive in 2022. But the blue wave (the colour of the Democrats) that Ukraine had hoped for did not take place in the US elections on 5 November 2024. All the states, and the popular vote, were won by the Republicans. The Elephant Party (Grand Old Party - GOP) no longer wants expensive external interventions for the United States, causing concern among Ukrainian troops and Europeans. The Blue Hour must come from Europe. It refers to the period between day and night when the sky is almost filled with a darker blue than the sky blue of the day. Between dogs and wolves. Everything is possible, nothing is certain. Uncertainty is a source of anxiety but also prepares for action.

Several elements are worrying in Europe. Georgia has been the scene of daily protests since a pro-Russian government decided on 28 November 2024 to suspend the process of accession of the former Soviet republic to the European Union (11). The demonstrations are violently repressed by the government in place. Journalists and media are targeted by police. Hundreds of protesters are arrested. Political opponents are arrested and brutalized. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze promises to “do whatever is necessary to eradicate completely the liberal-fascism of the opposition”. The brutality of the terms is intended to terrorize. It reinforces the authoritarian excesses of the government in place. The situation is reminiscent of that which preceded the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine in 2014. The pro-European, Franco-Georgian president, Salomé Zourabichvili, had to cede the presidency on Sunday 29 December to a puppet president who was not elected by universal suffrage, a former footballer who has no qualifications. Many Georgians, even government supporters, were shocked by this crude manipulation, a straw man.

There are several signs that encourage optimism. In Romania, an unknown pro-Russian candidate with a conspiracy profile, Calin Georgescu, came out on top of the presidential elections on 24 November 2024 thanks to a surprising TikTok campaign. The Romanian intelligence services have shown that this sudden popularity on the most popular social network in Romania was the result of a Russian manipulation operation involving several hundred thousand euros. The second round of voting was cancelled and postponed sine die (12) by the constitutional court in December 2024. In the case of Romania, its membership of the European Union has protected it from the hybrid war waged by Russia to maneuver in the manipulation of votes.

In January 2025, the European presidency begins with Poland, a pioneering and leading country that broke away from the Soviet yoke in 1989. It will certainly help Ukraine on the road to freedom. The spirit of Solidarnosc must once again blow over Europe. *Slava Ukraini!*

- (1) Michel Pastoureau et Dominique Simonnet (2005) « Le petit livre des couleurs », Paris : Editions du Panama
- (2) European Union representation in France-
https://france.representation.ec.europa.eu/unie-dans-la-diversite_fr
- (3) Krzysztof *Kieślowski*, « Bleu », France, 1993.
- (4) Téléràma, article publié le 22 février 2024 (hasard ou coïncidence ?)-
<https://www.telerama.fr/cinema/films/trois-couleurs-bleu,28243.php>
- (5) Benjamin Quenelle, Le Monde, 20 décembre 2024-
https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/12/20/vladimir-poutine-deroule-son-narratif-de-chef-de-guerre-loin-des-espoirs-de-treuve-en-ukraine_6458069_3210.html
- (6) Sylvie Kauffmann « Trump, catalyseur du chaos du monde », Le Monde, 5 décembre 2024
- (7) Alain Barluet , le Figaro, 3 décembre 2024-
<https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/serguei-karaganov-architecte-de-la-politique-etrangere-russe-la-dissuasion-ne-fonctionne-plus-il-faut-reinstaurer-la-peur-20241203>
- (8) Emmanuel Grynszpan, “Kiev affirme avoir tué Igor Kirillov, général russe responsable de l’usage d’armes chimiques en Ukraine », Le Monde – 17 décembre 2024
- (9) Benjamin Quenelle « Un revers d’ampleur pour la Russie de Poutine », Le Monde 10 décembre 2024
- (10) Sylvie Kaufmann , encounter with the Finish président, Alexander Stubb 7th of December 2024 (on the occasion of his coming for the inauguration of Notre Dame)
- (11) Editorial du Monde, samedi 7 décembre 2024
- (12) Mirel Bran « Les juges roumains annulent la présidentielle », Le Monde, 8 &9 décembre 2024

Newsletter written on Monday, December 30, 2024

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