



Solidarity for Ukraine – 01/08/2022- issue 6 – Sound and fury

IN THIS ISSUE

Why this newsletter

Vladimir Putin, a blended past

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 6th issue 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.

During the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, numerous articles and documentaries emphasized the psychological profile of the two main actors- the Russian leader, Vladimir Putin and the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky. Two men who are opposed to everything except the fact of speaking Russian. We suggest putting together the main pieces of their respective journeys. We will wonder why the Russian president and his most belligerent supporters misunderstood the Ukrainian president. The “sound” / “noise” in the hidden sense of the error of judgment (1) triggered a “fury”, a war in Europe, the first since the 1990s with the Balkan war that had remained peripheral. The war in Ukraine has an international echo with the (re)formation of two blocs- democratic countries against authoritarian regimes. Thought of by Russian «strategists», the war does not take the turn expected by the «intelligence» service.

- 1- Vladimir Putin, a blended past
- 2- Volodymyr Zelensky, another image for Europe
- 3- The origins of the “noise” in the Russian camp
- 4- About Intelligence

* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Vladimir Vladimirovitch Putine, blended past

The Russian president was born in Saint Petersburg, then Leningrad, on October 7, 1952. He was born after two young children died. His mother had his son secretly baptized at the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, while baptism was severely punished at the time in the Soviet Union. His father was a Red Army soldier in 1941 when he was seriously wounded in the leg. Her mother survived the siege of Leningrad and was rescued by her husband back from the hospital. After the war, his parents worked at the railway factory in Leningrad. His paternal grandparents were peasants in Pominovo, belonging to the village of Tourguinovo (Tver oblast), north of Moscow.

An officer of the KGB, the most well-known post Stalinist Soviet intelligence service, he was posted to East Germany, belonging to the Warsaw Pact, in the city of Dresden, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. After the collapse of the USSR, which would remain a personal wound (3), he began a political career at the town hall of Saint Petersburg. He became one of the closest advisers to President Boris Yeltsin, who appointed him director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) in 1998 and then president of the Russian government in 1999. After Boris Yeltsin's resignation on 31 December 1999, he assumed the functions of President of the Russian Federation on an interim basis.

Vladimir Putin became president in May 2000, winning the March presidential election in the first round. Between 2000 and 2004, he launched a series of reforms to restore the power of a country facing an economic crisis and having lost its influence in the world. The recovery of the national economy and politics is characterized by a concentration of presidential powers and the appointment to key positions in the economy of oligarchs, vassalized by the Russian president from whom they entirely depend. Widely re-elected in 2004, he had to give way to Dimitri Medvedev in 2008 as the Russian constitution did not allow the president to hold three consecutive terms.

He returns in 2012, where he is challenged. He considers that his opponents are manipulated by America (3). He took the lead of a country "outclassed by the West and surrounded by NATO, humiliated by Obama and, after the annexation of Crimea, sanctioned and isolated." He thinks he is holding his revenge on the West by destabilizing his American rival (during the presidential elections of 2016), but also the Western elections and opinions (during the Brexit vote in UK in 2016 or during the presidential elections in France in 2017). His goal is to undermine the West through campaigns of misinformation and manipulation of opinion (war 3.0).

On the international scene, he supports the Syrian president (since 2012) together with Iran and China. Before the military intervention in Syria, he waged a brutal war in Chechnya (1999-2009). Ukraine has become his new target to reform what it considers to be the "Russian World" made up of "Greater Russia" in Moscow (Russia), "White Russia" in Minsk (Belarus) and "Little Russia" in Kiev (Ukraine) in a very hierarchical and imperialist conception of the Russian world, inspired by the Tsar's motto (4).

The terms most often used in analysts' comments are: brutality and balance of power, manipulation and falsehood, a spirit of revenge and a total lack of sense of compromise. Vladimir Putin's use of mafia slang also indicates "a kind of belonging to the underworld", which constitutes an implicit threat (5) - a man for whom the end justifies the means with unsavoury "friends".

Volodymyr Oleksandrovytch Zelensky, another face of Europe

The Ukrainian President was born on 25 January 1978 in Kryvyi Rih, a Soviet Socialist Republic. His father is a professor and head of the Department of Cybernetics and Computer Science at Kryvyi Rih State University of Economics and Technology. His mother is an engineer. His family is of Jewish origin, considered as a nationality under the Soviet era. His grandfather, Semyon, was a Red Army colonel during the Second World War; Semyon's father and three of his brothers were murdered during the Shoah. Volodymyr Zelenski is a Russian speaker.

After studying law, he became the producer, actor, screenwriter, and director, of a humorous television series starting in 2015, aired on channel 1+1 "Servant of the People". Premonitory, the series gives him the leading role, that of a high school teacher entering unexpectedly the presidency of Ukraine. This role allows him to acquire an important reputation in his country but also in Russia.

Without any political experience, he launched a party with the same name as his series, won the 2019 presidential election and became the youngest president in Ukraine's history in May, at the age of 41. His campaign, like his profile, is atypical. It is also minimalist. He targets the corruption of the elites and maintains confusion with his role in Servant of the People. He won against the outgoing head of state, Petro Poroshenko, with 73.2% of the vote in the second round. He immediately provoked early parliamentary elections, after which his party held an absolute majority of seats in the Rada (Ukrainian parliament).

From the beginning of his mandate, Zelensky worked to resume dialogue with the Russian aggressor who had occupied Crimea since 2014 and waged a war in the Donbass, relying on pro-Russian nationalists who wanted to join Russia. He met tirelessly with all relevant interlocutors in the Western world, notably at the annual conference of the Yalta European Strategy (kind of small Davos created in 2003, in Ukraine, by philanthropist Victor Pinchuk). (6). In his speech, he stressed the urgent need for reforms and urged his allies to maintain sanctions against the Russian aggressor whose war in the east caused more than 13,000 deaths. He also presents to the audience the dissident filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, hostage of Putin for five years and from whom he obtained, of high struggle, the liberation.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, he has led a heroic Ukrainian resistance, hailed by the international press and all the leaders of democratic regimes around the World. For Régis Genté, co-author of "Volodymyr Zelensky, in the head of a hero" (7), "There is a lot of talk about a Zelensky who proved to be a true head of state at the start of the war on 24 February, but indeed, on 9 December 2019, he had already proved that he would stand up to Moscow." This is

the date of his first meeting in a «Normandy format», with Vladimir Putin on the implementation of the Minsk II agreements (2015); he gave nothing to the Russian president.

Since February 24, 2024, “He is, revealed by the tragedy, a sovereign and calm head of war and state, indifferent to the threats of the assassin who put him at the top of his “kill list.” (.../...) who found the strength and humour to oppose subtle videos, posted like bottles in the sea (.../...) and who, to Joe Biden offering an exfiltration, replied the already memorable: We do not need taxis, but ammunition. This man is the other image of Europe.” (8)

The origins of the “noise” in the Russian camp

The personal dimension is important and even decisive in the most significant episodes of contemporary history. What would have been the Yalta conference of 1945 without Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin who organized the «sharing» of Europe? The Non-Aligned movement, born at the Bandung Conference in 1955, to oppose both the Western and Eastern blocks, owes everything to the guardianship figures of Nehru (India), Tito (former Yugoslavia), Nasser (Egypt) and Soekarno (Indonesia).

In times of war, the profile of the belligerents is essential to rally support at the international level but also mobilize its troops at the national level. The personality and the “way” of the leaders are decisive. “The conflict between Ukraine and Russia is not just between two countries, but also between two generations, with profoundly divergent modes of operation and world views” (9).

On the Russian side, researchers Maria Snegovaya and Kirill Petrov studied the professional and family careers of the «top 100» Russian elite. Thirty years after the end of the USSR, 60% of its members still come from the Soviet Nomenklatura, which represents between 1 and 3% of the Soviet population (9). The average age of the Russian Security Council, which plays a central role in the war, is 62; that of the presidential administration is 59. More decisive than age, the proportion of women in the Russian team is very low. Finally, we must add the overrepresentation of the Viki silo, the «men with epaulettes», heirs of the KGB and other Soviet security bodies, and their children. The methods have not changed – the culture of the *papotchka*, a cardboard file (initialled in the French administration) which passes all the steps before arriving at the leader - Vladimir Putin, refractory to the Internet, who reads a lot.

This age-old culture does not know initiative, loves secrecy and encourages respectful and respectful employees of the hierarchy. These «Putin’s men» also have in common that they went through troubled times in the 1990s, which led to the fall of the USSR and could have been the death knell of Russia. They developed an «end of the world» mentality with a mental universe characterized by the obsession of encirclement, the paranoia of Western conspiracy and an imperial logic.

A more conjunctural element, the Covid-19 pandemic, aggravated the situation by causing Vladimir Putin to become isolated, obsessed with his health, while an aging Soviet leader like Brezhnev had a more collegial exercise of power (10). The Russian president has also built an image of a virile, athletic, strong, healthy man. For many observers, his age and declining physical condition no doubt explain the attack on Ukraine that appears as his swan song.

To break through «the image of a wise and reassuring grandfather» forged by the communicators of the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin draws his last arrows with a «poutinade» that would have deserved more attention (5). At the February 7, 2022 press conference, referring to the Minsk Accords, the Russian President said that Ukraine should implement them by sending the following maxim (from a Tchastouchka, scabrous verse and satyric verse) to the Ukrainian President: “Whether you like it or not, it’s up to you to bear it, my dear.” At the beginning of the war in Chechnya, Yves Hamant recalls that Vladimir Putin had had these words very little diplomatic and unexpected in the mouth of a political leader by declaring that his country would «shoot the Chechen terrorists to the toilet». The triviality of the comments made is an additional clue. For Yves Hamant, the contamination of Russian society by mafia «morals» has led to the criminalization of the language (11) which belongs to an obscene and violent register, the language of hatred, initially used for military purposes.

The hateful language, the declining physique and a contemptuous attitude towards the head of his intelligence services during a live broadcast meeting before the outbreak of hostilities in February 2024 are very revealing. They lead to questions about the profile of the Russian leader- a big delinquent / a “Caïd” or a paranoid tyrant, or perhaps a combination of both ; the distinction is important because it implies a differentiated reaction (5). Vladimir Putin is also surrounded by hawks with such insulting and rude speeches- Dmitry Medvedev who talks about the «degenerated» of the West (12); Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs who evokes, during a speech on February 18, 2022, the *poniatiya* , the rules of the Mob (applied by the “Bosses” of the underworld) that should be applied at an international level, in particular with the United States.

About intelligence

It is impossible to know the exact number of agents working for the Russian intelligence services, but they are estimated to be between 15,000 and 30,000. We sometimes talk about “Intelligence service” with the most famous agency in the world - the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). There is also what psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer call emotional intelligence (EI), a concept popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995 (13) which is close to social intelligence. It is defined as “the ability to recognize, understand and control one’s own emotions and deal with the emotions of others.” It seems that Russian intelligence services have lacked this form of intelligence.

We imagine that since the election of Volodymir Zelensky in May 2019, and probably even before, since the celebrity of his series «Servant of the People» in 2015, his psychological profile had to be the subject of all attention. The most sophisticated diagnoses had to be developed by the most eminent psychologists and psychiatrists. One can even imagine that emissaries were sent to him who had to provide valuable information to Volodymir Zelensky. In the film “The Godfather”, which celebrates its 50th birthday (1972-2022), Don Corleone recommends to his last son, Michael, his successor, that he be very attentive to these people, who are so well informed about you, and who pretend to be your friends (14). The caricature they sometimes have of you gives you edifying, sometimes very disheartening, indications on the image that these “friends” have of you.

Several hypotheses can be put forward on the «profile» of Volodymir Zelensky.

The first is that the Russian services did not take him seriously. They saw the “clown”, the entertainer, the comedy artist who used to put on his TV shows boyish jokes. A retarded, immature teenager who didn’t take anything seriously, a superficial man. They stopped at the character of his series “The Servant of the People”, a somewhat naïve and candid teacher who knew nothing of life, who had not done the “street school”, who had not been “abruptly faced with the harsh realities, a privileged one. He had two major handicaps: he had not been a soldier and even worse didn’t belong to the intelligence services- he was not part of the *siloviki* so sided in the Putin clan, «serious» men. They should have considered his family history, a grandfather with a career in the Red Army and a family hard hit during World War II. This family «background» is meaningful.

The second hypothesis is that the agents of Russian intelligence have taken him for an opportunist. He would take advantage of the notoriety that his television series had brought him. His presidential term would be a farce, a meaningless adventure. He would seek to take advantage of his new situation, a kind of easy pension. He was not a man of conviction for them. He could easily be manipulated and influenced. He could be turned into a figurehead. The Russian services misjudged his first meeting with Vladimir Putin in December 2019 to evoke the terms of the Minsk agreements where Volodymir Zelensky was not impressed. His determination and perseverance for three years to create an international network ready to support him should have been a new indication. When you lack sincerity, you don’t take things so seriously. You stay at home, you avoid being noticed by a threatening neighbour, who leads a guerrilla in the Eastern part of your country, in Donbass since 2014.

The intelligence services were so wrong because they judged the Ukrainian president on the basis of their mental universe, their own criteria, their own stereotypes. Several years of careful observation did not allow them to escape their clichés. Their analysis was biased because they

were abused by their own prejudices. Any information received irremediably fed the image they had made from the beginning. Yet Volodymir Zelinsky was never reducible to the caricature they had of him. His character was his best protection. One does not distrust a man who seems to be a worldly being, so superficial; he can easily observe others. Paradoxically, humour also makes it possible to convey serious messages. His character of the «Servant of the People» was a rehearsal, a test, to know to what extent the Ukrainian opinion could follow him. The Ukrainians had already opposed Russian influence by violently demonstrating, during the Maidan Revolution in 2014, against the decision of the Ukrainian puppet government who refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union and supported an agreement with Russia (15).

On February 24, 2022, the surprise did not come from Russia, which militarily attacked Ukraine in a “special operation”, a war that does not say its name. The surprise came from a Ukrainian president who took the lead of an exceptional and unexpected resistance against a much more numerous aggressors, better equipped, an army ranked second in the World (15).

Volodymir Zelinsky has already entered Ukrainian and European history as a modern herald/hero of Democracy, violently attacked in the World. Ukrainians have been more «intelligent» than Russian services by placing 95% of their trust in a president whose popularity has never wavered since the beginning of the conflict.

Vox populi, vox dei.

- (1) « *It's all sound and fury, signifying nothing' is something you may say to or about a person who is making a big fuss, maybe shouting and/or using bad language, and becoming really angry concerning a particular issue, when it's not anything they can do something about, and all the noise and fuss amount to nothing and are just a waste of time and energy..* » in William Shakespeare, « « MacBeth » », Londres, 1623
- (2) , Kahneman D., Sibony O. et Sunstein C.R, (2021) « Noise . A Flaw in Human Judgment », New York, Boston & London : Little, Brown Spark, traduction française Paris: Odile Jacob, 2021
- (3) Antoine Vitkine «La vengeance de Poutine », documentaire diffusé par France 5 dans « Le monde en face » , France, 2022, 90 minutes - <https://www.france.tv/documentaires/politique/3244354-la-vengeance-de-poutine.html>
- (4) Ksenia Bolchakova et Philippe Lagnier « La fin du monde russe ? », documentaire diffusé sur Arte le 23 mai 2022,, France, 2022, 52mn- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWbGgJgsJho>
- (5) Yves Hamant, professor emeritus of Russian and Soviet civilization at the University of Paris West Nanterre, first translator of «L'Archipel du Goulag» by Alexandre Soljenitsyne (Paris: Seuil, 1974), «Putin's use of mafia slang indicates a kind of belonging to the world of criminals», op-ed published in Le Monde, 22 March 2022
- (6) Bernard-Henri Lévy « Volodymir Zelenski, à Kiev, deuxième », La règle du jeu, 23 septembre 2019 - <https://laregledujeu.org/2019/09/23/35188/bhl-volodymyr-zelensky-a-kiev-deuxieme/>
- (7) Régis Genté, «War in Ukraine: «Zelensky is aware of having a people united behind him and fighting for life to death», answered the questions of the Internet users during a chat on «Lemonde.fr»- published on 24 May 2022 at 19:27- https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/05/24/guerre-en-ukraine-zelensky-a-conscience-d-avoir-un-peuple-uni-derriere-lui-et-qui-se-bat-a-la-vie-a-la-mort_6127545_3210.html
- (8) Bernard-Henri Lévy, « Zelensky ou Poutine, telle est désormais la question » - 7 mars 2022- <https://laregledujeu.org/2022/03/07/38370/zelensky-ou-poutine-telle-est-desormais-la-question/> ; the French philosopher, writer and filmmaker has met him several times and has visited Ukraine many times since 2014
- (9) Benoît Vitkine « Entre la Russie et l'Ukraine, une fracture générationnelle », Le Monde, 24 mai 2022
- (10) Andreï Kozovoi, historien et auteur d'une biographie de Léonid Brejnev, cité par Benoît Vitkine, opus cité.
- (11) Yves Hamanbt cite le mot de l'historienne Françoise Thom (2018) « Comprendre le poutinisme », Paris : Desclée de Brouwer
- (12) Benoît Vitkine, article du Monde du 9 juin 2022
- (13) Daniel Goleman, (1997). « L'Intelligence émotionnelle : Comment transformer ses émotions en intelligence ». Paris: Robert. Laffont, 421 p.
- (14) Francis Ford Coppola « Le parrain », Etats-Unis, 1972.
- (15) <https://www.7x7.press/les-7-armees-les-plus-puissantes-au-monde-en-2022#close>
- (16) Bernard-Henri Lévy, « Pourquoi l'Ukraine », documentaire passé sur Arte en juin 2022, France, 62 minutes, <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/109328-000-A/pourquoi-l-ukraine/>

Useful Contacts

To help Ukraine, here is a list of associations & NGOs published on the 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>