

A critical view

ONE YEAR ON

I. Miguel Ángel García | II. Gav Duncan | III. Oleg Gavrysh

Introduction

March 2023

Europe is a plain swept by the uncertainty of war. Bajmut, barely a cartographic reference, renamed "meat grinder". And the dictatorship of the daily life is measured by the price of tomatoes.

Europe is a project. Socially. Politically. Financially. A project that some consider finished, that others claim as the only way forward and that most are unaware of because of the limited scope of its politicians.

Europe is the flickering beacon of the West, a faded reminder of its colonial greatness barely preserved as a hinge between angry giants. And amidst all the turmoil, amidst all the noise, Bajmut continues to collect his pound of flesh.

> "At TYC we keep our taste for the deeper version of reality"

The war is more than a year away, but a nuclear-tipped missile launched from Kaliningrad would just take four minutes to hit Madrid. The price of tomatoes is sky-high. The constant election campaign volatilised in less than 240 seconds.

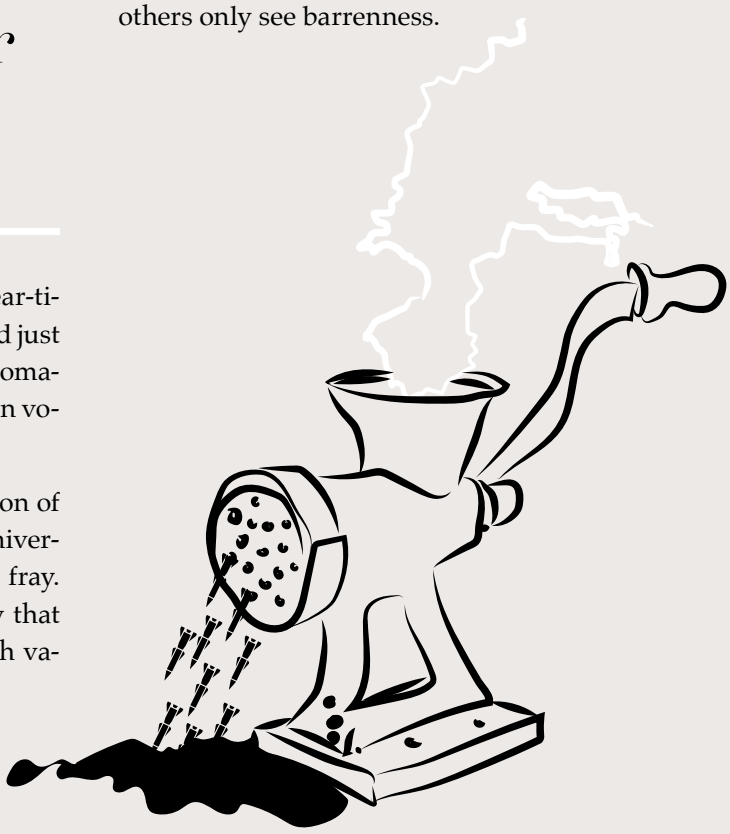
At T&C we keep our taste for the deeper version of reality. Now that the spotlight of the war anniversary has been extinguished, we return to the fray. We share a speedy version of the critical view that a year ago led us to travel around Europe with various professors, thinkers and journalists.

Time has also taken its toll on them. Most of them have been lost in the infinite plain of the also infinite European project. And yet there they are, three voices that evoke the complex chorus of our times.

In favour of the EU. Miguel Ángel García, a member of the elite of TVE correspondents, whose work has mitigated the deterioration of the great common home that is public television.

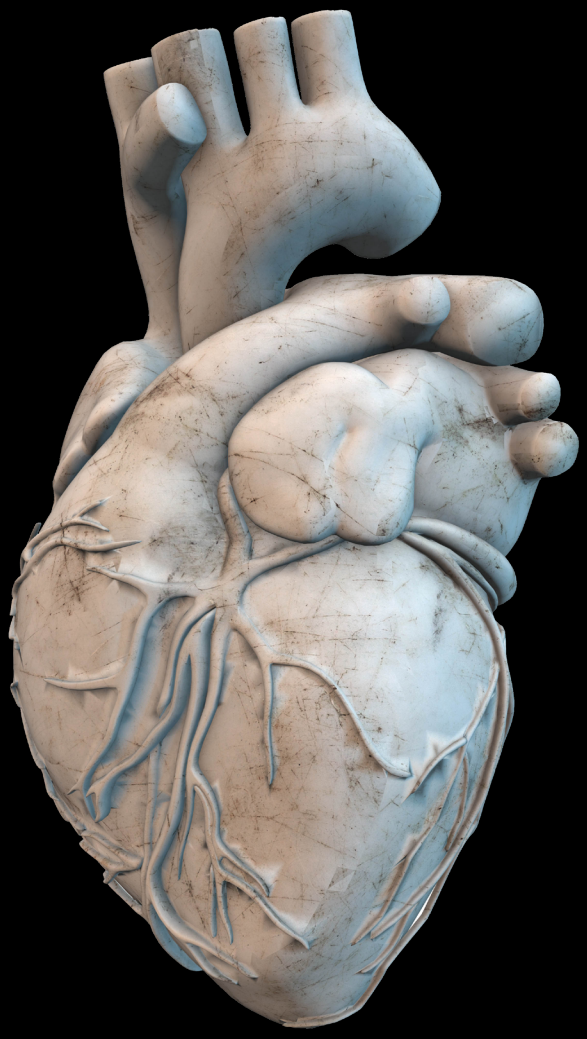
Against the EU. Gav Duncan, British-born and Hungarian by destiny. A dissident vision of the European dream and an echo of a Slavic nationalism that is always narrated with tragic overtones.

EU aspirant. Oleg Gavrysh, a Ukrainian businessman, represents the dream of the European neophyte who sees in the great plain hope where others only see barrenness.



Miguel A. García

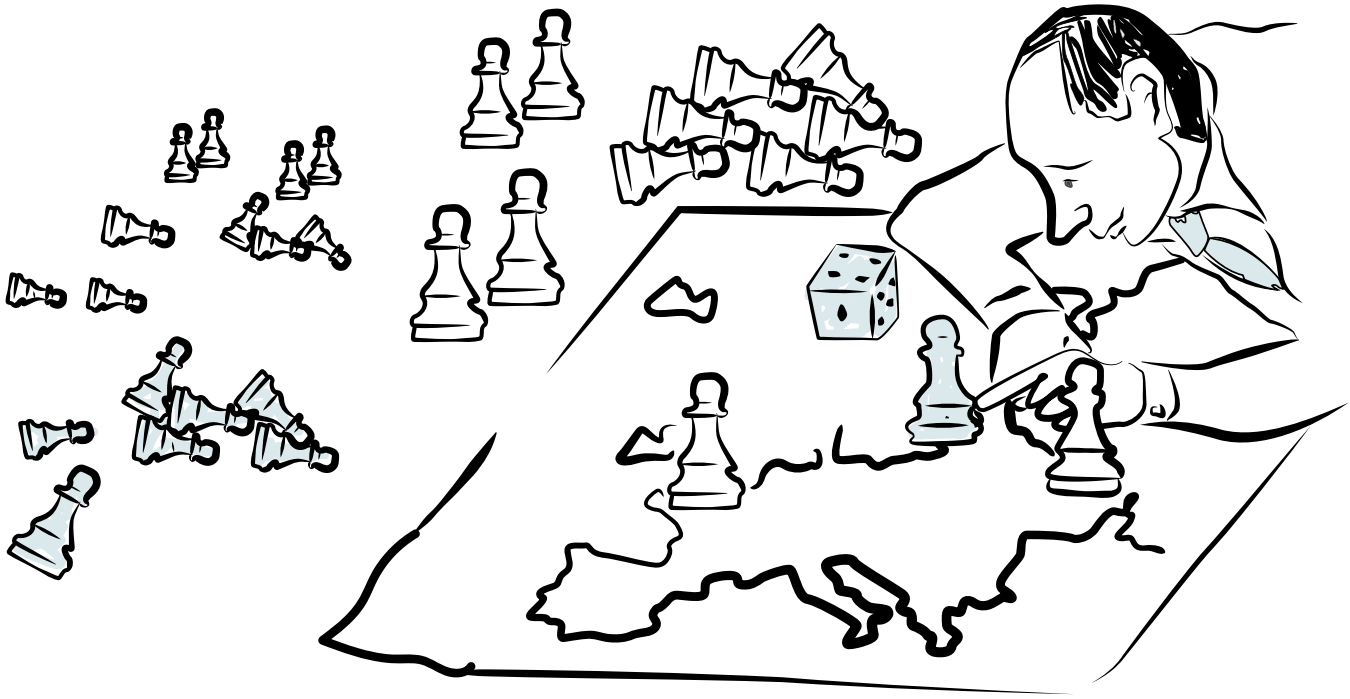
Former TVE Correspondent in Berlin



TVE correspondent in Berlin for over 14 years. In 2022, he reminded us that Germany is very close to the war, as its connections with Russia cannot be found in any other European country. García is clear that the EU has a vital role to play in the war in Ukraine, as it represents the democracy that Putin fears. However, he believes that the stability of democracy is showing signs of erosion. For him, the key is to maintain the unity of the European Union.

"The war in Ukraine is so close and so dangerous that it is difficult to forget it"

Miguel Ángel García | Former TVE Correspondent in Berlin



We are getting used to war. Will it become another forgotten conflict?

It is clear that we have been getting used to the images of war. They no longer generate the panic of the early days, with a war that no one knew how it would affect us. But it will hardly become a forgotten conflict. Ukraine is not a small country on a huge continent like Africa or Asia. It is a country of considerable size and population on Europe's doorstep. It is so close and so dangerous that we will hardly forget that there is a war in Ukraine, that this war can spread to the Baltic countries, to Moldova, even to Poland...

Getting used to the images, to living with a war on your doorstep, is a must, even the Ukrainians have had to get used to it in order to survive. You cannot live with the adrenaline and panic of the first days. But while the war in Ukraine may become an entrenched conflict that will last for years, it will by no means become a forgotten conflict for Europeans.

Could Putin's Greater Russia dream take the conflict to other countries?

My opinion of Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has not changed at all. In fact, it has been confirmed. Any judgement on Putin is pure speculation, as even the most powerful secret services seem unable to decipher his thoughts. But for all his unpredictability, he has become predictable. Driven by his desire for grandeur, it seems clear at this point that Putin misjudged the potential resistance of the Ukrainians. I am sure that if he had known how far Ukrainian opposition and NATO countries' military and material assistance would go, he would not have invaded Ukraine.

It has become clear that, regardless of the propaganda announcements of new hypersonic missiles, the Russian military is an obsolete, technically, militarily and morally ill-prepared army. Putin will probably choose to extend the conflict indefinitely in view of his inability to gain a foothold and consolidate his position in eastern Ukraine. His aim would be for Western countries to tire of sending aid to Ukraine, burdened by war inflation. But this may also work against it. Russia may follow the path that the USSR took: economic suffocation, tiredness and the exhaustion of the Russian civilian population that so far still supports this war.

But beware: if Putin is cornered, he will surely opt for a forward flight, which means, attack elsewhere, in the Baltic countries, Moldova, in order to generate panic in Europe once again and aggravate the Europeans' weariness and defeatism. It should not be forgotten that Putin despises the Europeans because he believes they are decadent, and on that basis, he can take aggressive decisions that could trigger a much bigger conflict than the current one, with Beijing's blessing.



"Until Germany has shaken off its dependence on Russian gas with the construction of the two liquid gas platforms, it has been very reluctant to send aid to Ukraine. The first shipment of German military equipment consisted of 5,000 helmets and boots."

EU economic sanctions against Russia. Reality or pantomime?

The European sanctions are no pantomime, but neither have they been as effective as they were supposed to be. From Brussels and European governments, it was said that they would be devastating for Russia.

Obviously, they have not been. Putin had been preparing for decades for an autarky that has so far allowed him to save the furniture. It is very strange that we do not really know today what the real state of the Russian economy is. The media in Russia tell us that the Russians still mainly support Putin, that they are subjugated by the Kremlin's propaganda. But they have forgotten to go out on the streets and tell us how much a kilo of tomatoes or potatoes or a loaf of bread is worth.

Therein lies the secret of Putin's support. If, thanks to countries like Turkey, Iran or Israel, Putin manages to ensure that Russians can still eat relatively well and cheaply, then Europeans should think again about whether the current sanctions, which mainly affect so-called strategic sectors, are enough. The USSR did not fall because of the technological blockade, but because of the hunger of the population.

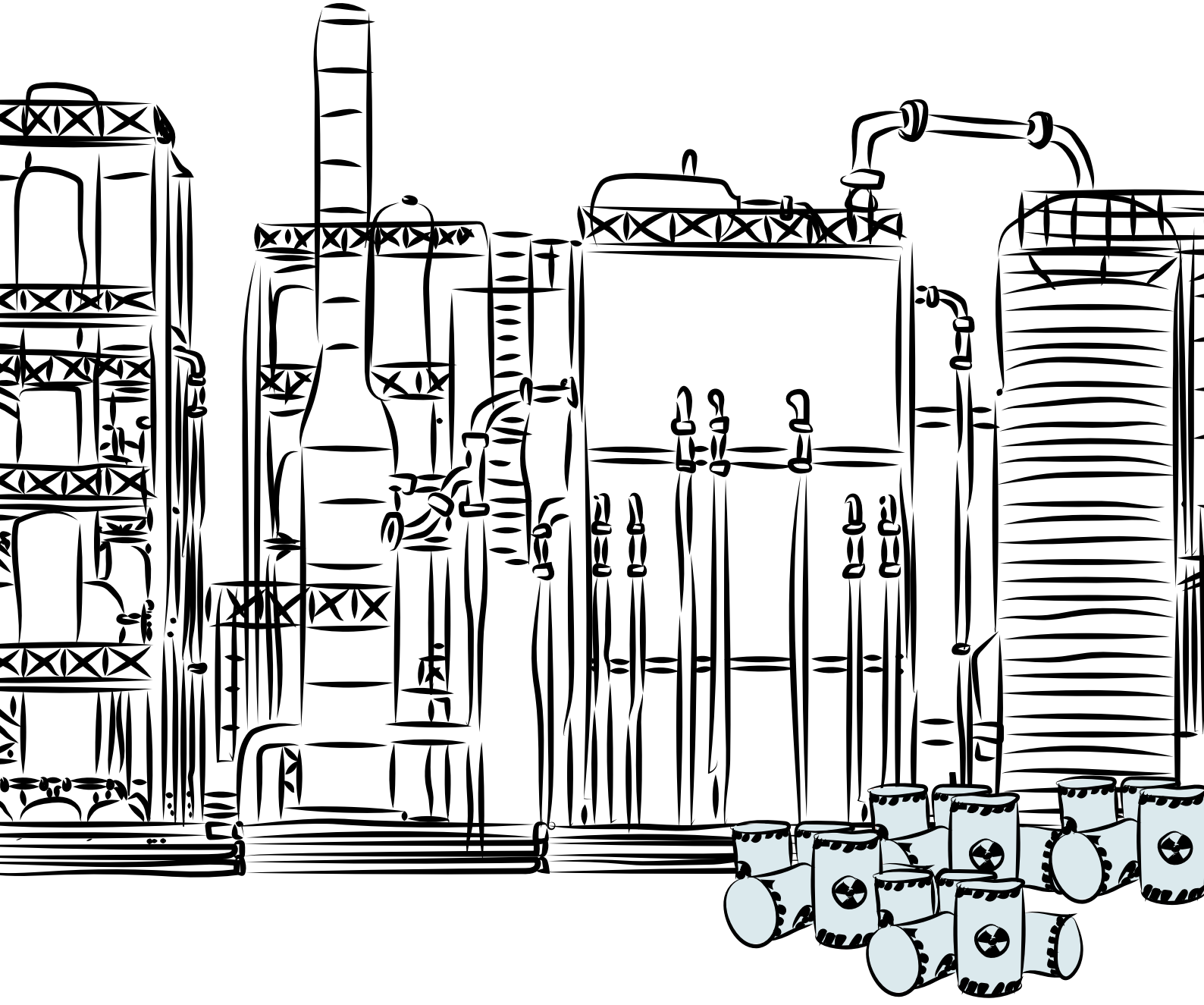
To what extent has Germany's high energy dependence on Russia influenced the actions taken by the Olaf Scholz government to support Ukraine?

It is clear that until Germany has shaken off its dependence on Russian gas with the construction of the two liquid gas platforms, it has been very reluctant to send aid to Ukraine. The first shipment of German military equipment consisted of 5,000 helmets and boots. Some people were already crying foul. Then, little by little, more and more sophisticated military equipment was sent, until finally the Leopard 2 panzers were accepted.

A year later, Germany is fully committed to military aid, has lost its fear of Putin, perhaps because it has realised that for Putin the border is not at the Dnieper, but at the Elbe and the Spree in East Berlin. Germany will soon have LPG ports and is fast developing the hydrogen economy. It will be some time before the dependence on gas and oil is forgotten, but with the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipelines there is no turning back.

There are still some German businessmen nostalgic for the good business done with Russian oligarchs, but that market has been dead for many years. Germany has had to reinvent itself, and with it the whole of Europe.

Eva Rancho | 13th March 2023



Gav Duncan

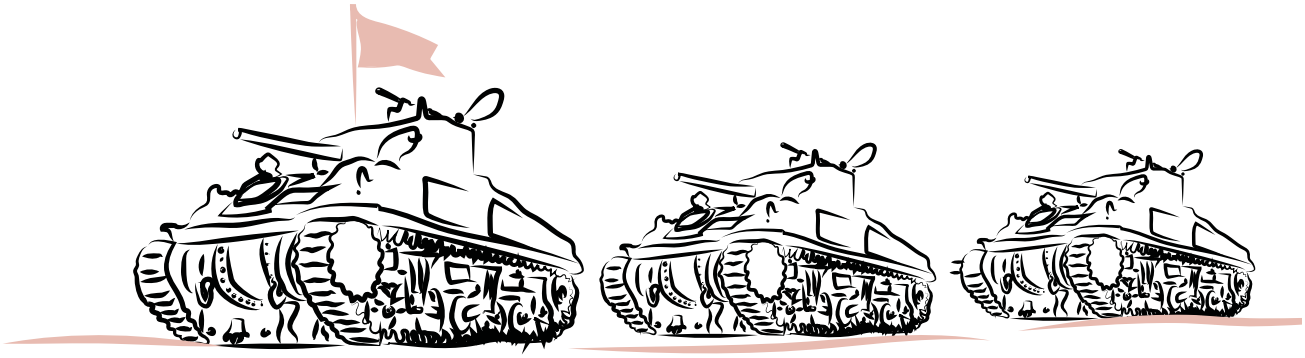
Contributor to Hungarian TV



A British-born journalist who has spent part of his career in Hungary. In fact, he holds both nationalities. A year ago, his view of the conflict brought a very different perspective to the Western media's approach. For him, the EU is still not a relevant stakeholder in a conflict that he considers innocuous for the permanence of European democracies. All of them. For Duncan, there is not just one type of democracy as endorsed by the EU, but each country has its own particular "adaptation" of the democratic model. This is something he claims in particular for Eastern countries. He completes this unique perspective with a clear animosity towards Ukraine's democratic quality. He says nothing about Russia's.

“Claiming that Ukraine is an example of democracy is embarrassing at almost all levels”

Gav Duncan | Contributor to Hungarian TV



Do you still affirm that the war in Ukraine is not a threat to European democracy?

The invasion of Ukraine has not affected European democracy. That said, we have been treated to some astonishing statements from people like Ursula von der Leyen. She has stated that Ukraine is a shining best example of democracy, a statement which is embarrassing at almost all levels. Minority rights, normally so important in the eyes of the EU/EC have been trampled upon still further by the Ukrainian state. Ukraine is continually held up as a shining example of a modern state, but the EU continually refuse to deal with, for example, back-tracking on minority rights (the rights of Hungarians in Ukraine to learn in their mother tongue, for example) which have long been a feature of Ukrainian politics.

We are told by certain leading lights of the European Commission that Ukraine is ready to join NATO and the EU. These statements are far from helpful. A country unable to provide an annual budget for its population cannot be considered ready for much, let alone joining NATO and the EU. Therefore, what the European Commission is doing is nothing more than what we have come to expect of it: it is engaging in political posturing, something which undermines its very existence. The EC, oblivious to reality, continue to degrade their own relevance.a la OTAN y a la UE.

Do you think Putin's vision strengthens the European far right?

To be honest, I don’t see any rise in far-right political parties within Europe. There is a lot of evidence regarding far-right militias in Ukraine... swastika tattoos in various army units, etc., which is dismissed out of hand by the majority of Western media. There continues to be a deliberate blurring of the distinction between the growth of nationalism and the supposed rise of the far right. Remarkably, most commentators applaud Ukraine for their nationalistic behaviour, whilst condemning other countries for the same. People are not either ill-informed or stupid. People will and do see double standards for what they are. This automatically expresses itself as more nationalist than globalist, but this is not evidence of the strengthe-

"A country unable to provide an annual budget for its population cannot be considered ready for much, let alone joining NATO and the EU."

ning of the far-right, merely a result of people deciding that they are, in contrast to what globalism tells them, differences between nations. This is neither a bad nor a good thing, this is merely a fact. We are all Europeans, but there are many, many cultural differences between the Spanish and the Hungarians, for example. Why wouldn't there be?

"The Western countries now providing military are risking the expansion of the war to involve NATO"

Do you still criticise the criteria for the distribution of European funds?

The EU has some very strange ideas about how to assist the Ukrainians. At present Hungary is providing help to refugees fleeing from, and also remaining in. The EU decided to ignore Hungary's suggestion that all EU member states conclude bilateral agreements with Ukraine to provide for their (in practical terms, non-existent) budget. The Hungarian idea made sense. Why would we seek to tie all EU members to a centrally-raised loan?

The EU is determined to try and forge a community by increasing burdens on some members of that community. That's got to be one of the most illogical ideas known to man. The EU, presently controlled by forces that would wish the creation of a United States of Europe, decided to raise a common loan to pay Ukraine EUR 18 bn. Hungary blocked this deal until the EU agreed to pay Hungary some of the covid recovery fund that had been delayed for political reasons. Political horse-trading, is nothing out of the ordinary.

Is Zelenski forcing NATO to intervene in the conflict?

The Western countries now providing military are risking the expansion of the war to involve NATO. That cannot be considered to be a sensible approach. Even now as the US Secretary of State is urging that Ukraine not attempt to wrest Crimea from Russia, there are those who are advocating exactly that.

The population of Europe will, in all probability, not look favourably upon those leaders who, in place of economic security, encourage Europe on a path to a potential Europe-wide conflict. The EU, partially conceived as a body to guarantee security has truly lost its way when it sacrifices the will of the people to a personal political goal. That is an utterly outrageous rejection of the very foundations of democracy.

Eva Rancho | 17th February 2023



Oleg Gavrysh

Mainstream CEO



Managing Director of the Ukrainian PR agency Mainstream. A year ago, fear of reprisals led him to ask us not to publish his photo. Throughout this time of strife, he has not stopped believing in Ukraine's victory. For him, it is synonymous with the victory of life over death, of light over darkness. According to Oleg, the time has come for Europe and the European Union to stand up to tyrants like Putin. But he also points out that this will require a transformation of the shape of EU politics and institutions.

“Ukrainians have earned their membership in the European Union with their blood”

Oleg Gavrysh | Mainstream CEO



A year ago you acknowledged and thanked Europe for its support for the Ukrainian people. How do you assess its performance in these 12 months?

First, I would like to express sincere gratitude to all European countries that, in their vast majority, are helping Ukraine and the Ukrainian people survive this bloody war. The current humanitarian and military cooperation, the protection of Ukrainian refugees, the responsibility of Europeans and the dedication of Ukrainians prove that Ukraine is already a de facto member of the European Union and the international democratic community.

In fact, Ukrainians have earned their membership in the European Union with their blood and the protection of European borders from the Russian military horde. As for European assistance for Ukraine, especially the military, I believe it should be more ambitious, large-scale (as the situation may be), and, most importantly, timely. If we can do this together, believe me, we can significantly decrease the number of victims among the civilian population of Ukraine and the military. And bring the end of the hot phase of the war closer.

How do Ukrainians experience Zelenski's European trips or contacts?

Of course, people support the president on his trips to Europe and the USA. These are bold and complicated trips, given that Russians have prepared over 20 attempts on Zelensky’s life over

the past year. With the beginning of hostilities, the president has brought together all of Ukraine, even those who did not support his policy within the country, including me. Over the year, the approval rating of Mr Zelensky reached 95-98%. All the president's work and all his online and offline meetings are aimed at maintaining constant contact with the international community, expressing gratitude for the support and communicating the complexity of the situation and the need to speed up the transfer of the necessary weapons to Ukraine. Timely transfer. The Ukrainian president became the leader of Europe and the free world in the confrontation with Russian invaders.

"Many German, French, Dutch, English, Japanese and other companies continue to work in Russia. Moreover, part continues operation under their brands, and some resell business to former local managers for 1 €"

What is the daily life of Kyiv citizens like right now outside of what we see in the media?

You may not believe it, but it is an ordinary life. Not easy, but almost normal. Despite the constant air raid alerts, missile strikes on peaceful houses, despite the volunteer work and the depletion of budgets of companies and citizens (we donate much money to buy weapons, body armour, warm clothes, and food for the army), Kyiv lives a fairly typical daily life. Shops, restaurants, cafes and even theatres are open. But almost every business donates part of the revenues to refugees and the army. It is difficult, sometimes very difficult, for everyone who remained in Kyiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Odesa, Mykolaiv and other cities. But the cities are restored, and life keeps going on. I invite you to come to Kyiv and see for yourself.

Has energy dependence led to double standards in EU states?

This is a painful question. And not only in terms of gas and oil consumption. Yes, so far, a significant part of European business lives by double standards. You know that many German, French, Dutch, English, Japanese and other companies continue to work in Russia. Moreover, part continues operation under their brands, and some resell business to former local managers for 1 €. Moreover, after capturing and destroying or stopping Ukrainian metallurgy, particularly Azovstal and other plants of the Donetsk region, Russian metallurgy increased the supply of their products to Europe with the help of the Russian army. The situation in the agrarian sector is much the same. I understand that European leaders want to prevent an increase in unemployment or food shortages, but they must realise that these double standards extend the agony of the Putin regime.

And we must remind everyone that every euro earned in this way or every croissant on a store shelf or in a cafe is covered in Ukrainian people's blood. Indecision, inability or unwillingness to honestly communicate with your people prolongs bloodshed and brings the war into every European house. And in the end, the victory over evil, over the Putin regime, will be much more expensive for Europe and the world.

Eva Rancho | 21th February 2023



A critical view

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