

UKRAINE: A CRADLE OF LIBERTY

An Independence Day Letter | 24 August 2026

On the 35th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, a reflection on the historic bond between Greece and Ukraine, and on the meaning and price of liberty.

In 1814, in a parlor in Odesa, three Greek merchants founded a secret society called the Filiki Eteria. Their purpose was to free Greece from four centuries of Ottoman rule. Modern Greek independence was not conceived in Athens or Thessaloniki. It was conceived here, on Ukrainian soil.

I am a Greek-American. My freedom, and my family's, began in that room.

Two hundred and twelve years later, I live and work in the country that gave my ancestors the room to imagine a free Greece. And I watch it fight the same fight.

Living here, I am inspired and distressed in equal measure.

Inspired by a people who have decided, without hesitation, that their freedom is worth more than their safety.

Distressed that in 2026, humanity has normalized the bombing of a shopping center in broad daylight, in a sovereign nation that threatened no one, least of all Russia. And it was not struck once. It was struck a second time, after the first responders arrived. That second strike was not a mistake. It was the purpose. That is terror by design. So are the missiles that fall on children's hospitals, on schools, on churches, on apartment buildings where families sleep.

Then there was the boy on the bicycle.

He was riding down a dirt road. A Russian drone found him, followed him, and killed him. He was a child on a bicycle. Someone watched him through a camera and decided he should die.

Where is the outrage? Where is the indignation? How did this become ordinary in 2026, in the largest country in Europe?

There seems to be no limit to what some men will do, and no end to it. And for what? Because Ukraine chose democracy and prospered by it. Because a free and rising Ukraine is an unbearable argument against the kleptocrats in Moscow, whose ambition is to keep subjugating the peoples the USSR once held. The plain truth is that Ukrainians are better off than they were under Soviet rule, and that is precisely what Putin cannot forgive.

This is not the first time. The Ukrainian people have suffered under Soviet and Russian imperialism generation after generation. They are intelligent, faithful, family-centered, and relentlessly industrious. What they want is not complicated: a free and prosperous country, and children who grow up healthy, happy, and unafraid.

It is the same thing America's founders set out to secure when they wrote of the unalienable right to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Those words were not a description of the world as it was. They were a declaration of what men were willing to bleed for. My ancestors wrote that sentence in an Odesa parlor. Americans wrote it in Philadelphia. Ukrainians are writing it today, not in ink, but in blood.

On Ukraine's Independence Day, I am honored and humbled to live and work among the finest people I have known. I pray that God continues to give them strength, determination, and resolve. Freedom in this country was not inherited. It is being earned, every single day, at a price most of the world has forgotten it ever had to pay.

Ukraine has been a cradle of liberty for far longer than the world remembers. It is one again today.

Happy Independence Day to all the good people of Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini!

Maximum Respect!

Nick