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On the toxic “fraternity” between nations

Eugene Leshan

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The Russian-Ukrainian war is the most prominent application of the “fraternal nations” concept. Any attempt to dichotomize between the war and such “fraternity” signifies that you understand neither war nor fraternity, or that you are consciously lying. Putin is indeed destroying any formal remains of goodwill between the Ukrainians and the Russians. However, goodwill is not even remotely close to “fraternity”. Mutually beneficial cooperation is a form of international relations. For example, the sides find beneficial ways to cooperate, trade, or develop scientific and cultural interaction. It makes you less distant, expands your shared space, and creates new points of closure. At the same time, mutually beneficial cooperation stimulates you to find common ground on the questions for which the sides have no common answer, or at least to avoid widening the cracks. Mutually beneficial relations tend to sustain themselves while having a basis in rational actions. Usually, they neither require nor exclude any kind of ideological or irrational superstructure.

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Such relations depend on neither common ancestry, nor linguistic or religious unity, nor any other such factors.

The concept of “fraternal nations” flips it. The common historic ancestry, the closeness of languages, and the shared religious background become not a superstructure, but the basis, which then requires you to collaborate. “We are fraternal nations”, the thesis, is not about love. It is about enforcing an irrational obligation that has no basis in your interest but inexplicably matches the will of the initiator of this toxic interaction. Moreover, if you stick with reason and refuse to sacrifice yourself for “fraternity,” the concept automatically moves you into the “traitor” category. Regardless of whether you have pledged allegiance to your “brother”, you are obliged to him simply because of your ancestry, and nothing can cancel this debt of yours. Following that sacred bullshit concept, the supposed debtors and traitors to their brother must be punished.

The point of “fraternity” is to strip you of all agency outside of the boundaries that your toxic “relative” has set.

“National fraternity” is therefore an ideologic concept. It is designed to irrationally enforce the domination of the one who initiated the relationship over those whom he forced to join. It frees him from the need to ask them for consent or promise them any reciprocity.

“Fraternity” has no other meaning. The bombs dropped by the Russian planes on the Ukrainian cities today are not a crack in the “fraternal” relations between Russia and Ukraine, but their only possible development. A punishment for the supposed treachery. A desperate attempt to domesticate those who have discovered themselves and decided to remain free forever.

To those Russians who are attempting to express their support for Ukraine today, our first (but far from final) demand is that they abandon the rhetoric of “national fraternity”. Yes, we have got all the reasons to be hard-to-please, strict and cold. Obviously, the Russians do not have to fulfill our demands in order for us to like them; we will never like them. Having fulfilled

our demands, they will free themselves from the pus of their imperialism: one drop at a time, as Antin Chekhiv bequeathed. Only then will they be able to demonstrate their ability to foster positive relationships.

Any transition to mutually beneficial cooperation can only happen after this course of arduous and painful treatment succeeds. Of course, no cooperation will ever be possible with the Russian Federation, the direct offspring of the violent “fraternation”. The Russian Federation must disappear as we abolish “fraternity”. However, new democratic countries will be born from the ruins of the old empire. We can indeed cooperate with them to our mutual benefit.

It’s important not just for us, the people of modern Russia need it themselves. If they understand it, they will have a chance to recover. Godspeed.