

Fuck leftist westplaining

Zosia Brom

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Earlier this week, the Polish parliamentary progressive left party, Razem, issued a statement in which they announce that they are cutting ties with two European organisations: Progressive International and DiEM25.

“The Russian aggression in Ukraine demands a lot of work from us and- unfortunately- explaining of many issues to the west European left,” Razem states on their socials, “Yesterday, our National Council decided to leave Progressive International and DiEM25. Why? For reasons incomprehensible to us, both movements did not unequivocally condemn the imperialist and aggressive actions of the Russian Federation and did not unequivocally support the sovereignty of Ukraine, dangerously relativising this war.”

I support this very polite and carefully worded statement, but this is Freedom so let me deliver this message by Razem differently: Fuck.You. Or, at the very least, Shut.The.Fuck.Up.

This text isn't specifically about the Western anarchists. Despite an odd “Ukraine's Nazi army” here and there, I think the anarchists are not too bad on the issues of Russian imperialism: both presently and historically. Some more work needs doing for sure but, especially compared to some other parts of the UK, and wider, Western left, I give my anarchist comrades a B minus here. You still know fuck-all about Eastern Europe and the only word in the relevant languages you are familiar with is “kurwa”, but at least most of you are not struggling to establish who is the baddie in the current situation. Now, you pathetic tankies and other cranks, it's your attention we wish to have for the next few paragraphs.

This text isn't exclusively about the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine either as much as it is about a much wider trend in Western leftism. You can apply the points raised below not only to the discourse around Eastern Europe and the so-called post-Soviet world. Similar themes were, disgracefully, displayed in the leftist discussion around the Syrian War, for example. Large parts of the left, supported by their glorious leader Jeremy Corbyn, struggled to identify who is in charge of the vast majority of the war crimes committed in Syria (Spoilers: it was, ofc, Assad supported by Putin). But, while back in the day I partook in some Syria solidarity actions, I also do not think it is my place to speak about this conflict. There are better people to do this, and if they are so inclined then I can say: be my guest.

This text was written with consultations with other Eastern European comrades. I am signing it with my name, mainly so you can then give me the joy of an accusation of myself being CIA-

funded or something, but be informed that many East Europe leftists are on the same page here, and we have been discussing it for a while now.

This text will be a bit chaotic and I request you put up with this. Like most Eastern Europeans, I have spent the past week or so living in some kind of haze, where news cycles really last 24hrs, there is no sleep, and your phone rings constantly. Some of my friends, those from Central and Eastern Europe mostly, want to share their worries, they are organising support networks, collecting money, publishing How-To-Flee-Ukraine guides in multiple languages, cooking, driving scared and exhausted people to their temporary accommodation. Many, rightfully, share their disgust in the differences in how the Polish state and society (and wider, European states and societies) approach another “refugee crisis” just a bit further north, on the Belarusian parts of the Polish border, or the “refugee crisis” in other parts of Europe. Some are facing the very real possibility of finding themselves in combat soon. Some worry about their family currently in a war zone, some are in this war zone themselves. All are angry. All are sad to the point you are unlikely to understand.

While you are exchanging hot takes on Twitter, we are busy.

Every day, I wake up and the first thought in my head is: the Russian Army is invading Ukraine. After a few days of a sluggish parade, it looks like they are now seriously aiming at Kyiv. I have never thought I will be coming up with such sentences in a present tense. It is terrifying. You, the Westerners, will never get it. Partially because most of you have a completely different experience of history, and it is that of living your life in a dominating country. Partially because you can't be arsed to listen, and you never were. It is just simply inconvenient for you to give an idea that won't fit to your already established view of the World a thought, and let's face it, deep down most of you think that your ideas and your concepts are better, and more legit. Western exceptionalism is a worm in your brain, a worm you pretend to escape, only to parade your yankee, Queen of England ignorance around. You are better and more legit. You have better insights. You are used to being listened to. You not gonna use Google translate, because how come things are not in English, the terror!

But the Westerners call too, so I do my best explain the basic stuff I grew up with and some of the stuff that was passed on to me by the generations of trauma. Or what is the correct pronunciation of Kharkiv. Or, the worst: they want to explain to me how this is a NATO created conflict, or, if they happen to feel more generous, they come up with some kind of “both sides to blame” rhetoric. Look, Ukrainians are waving national flags, FASCISTS! If we could erase and dismiss your entire regions as easily as you do ours we absolutely would, sadly the internet is once again, also pretty much controlled by your lot. Well done – direct action right now would be log off, at least our timelines would be polluted less.

Your lack of knowledge on the issues of Russia and the rest of the world formerly behind the Iron Curtain is, frankly, astonishing, surprising and the lack of curiosity – shameful. In London and the wider UK, you got comrades coming from all these countries that joined the EU since 2004 and apparently you have never bothered to even attempt to understand what we are about. We were good for some things, mainly, in the leftist reflection of the mainstream trope of a “Polish builder” or “Lithuanian cleaner” (good, hard-working, simple people), we were good for more hands-on stuff. But never good enough for actually having opinions: apparently even about the stuff we grew up with. The unique version of Orientalism that you hold towards us, seeing as either simpletons, or racist, primitive, but honourable – you know exactly what we mean, admit it.

I came to the UK in 2004: 18 years ago. Culturally, it was and still is a very bizarre experience and maybe one day I will write another rant about it. One of the aspects of it is the tolerance, or simply embracement, of the Soviet imagery and sentiments (the sentiments and imagery, let me point out, that do not belong to you). At some point, you guys made Red London, a Stalinist page, the most popular leftist FB page in the country. You tolerate giant portraits of Stalin and Mao on Mayday marches, and fucking hell, in 2017 you tolerated the flag of something called Syrian Social Nationalist Party being sported on Mayday march in London, despite it looking fascist AF even without any knowledge on Syria.

To you it's all a joke to put on a mug or your other merch. Fuck you.

You, decades after the Eastern European version of communism collapsed and Russia turned into a turbocapitalist, authoritarian regime, are still claiming that the man in charge of it is some kind of "anti-imperialist" hero, despite him doing pretty much all he can to assure his stated aim of rebuilding the Russian empire and beyond. Similarly, in your heads, NATO and other Western organisations are always on the wrong side, and always perpetrators of everything bad in this world. You could, ofc, google it, but who would bother if you have such intellectual figures as Noam Chomsky with his disgraceful, relativising stances to tell you what to think.

In the weeks coming to the Russian invasion, the Westerners contributed a fair few texts to Freedom and in them, they tried to push this narrative. I rejected them all as they were dishonest and frankly gaslight-y. In response, one of you, someone I published before, got back to me, asking "where have you been in the past 20 years?" and "'Being Polish' is no kind of response at all". Ofc, in their mind, "being British" is enough to have strong opinions on the issues affecting other nations, and other people's borders. As we know, it usually ends really well when British people do this, innit.

So, let me tell you a few things about Eastern Europeans and NATO and Russia.

We see NATO in a completely different, and I dare say much more nuanced way. We are not fans of it, and we can agree with you on many, many reasons to criticise it. But when you say "Fuck NATO" or "End NATO expansion", what I hear is that you do not care about the safety and wellbeing of my Eastern European friends, family and comrades. You are happy to put my mum at risk for cheap political points you would not even be able to act on, you bastards!

When you talk about "expansion", with everything this word implies, really, you are referring to this process in which Eastern Europe, for the reason of other countries making decisions over our heads in 1945, quite literally tip-toed around Russia petitioning it to allow us do what we wanted to do. Eventually, this resulted in Russia signing something called the *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*. This happened in May 1997 and Russia, finally, agreed to what you are now calling "expansion" provided that certain conditions are met. These conditions effectively made us second-class members of NATO, but hey ho, that is all we could get and we went for it. Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO in 1999, the Baltic countries followed in 2004. And for now, I want them to stay there, and it doesn't have much to do with politics tbh. It is a self-preservation instinct, but this is another thing you will just not get. You talk more about "NATO expansion" than you talk about the fact that you are the funding members of it.

Further, you talk about how you desire to stop "NATO expansion" but you don't really mention what, exactly, would be a viable alternative to it. This is not acceptable at all, it just shows your privilege of growing up in a country where your life story was not littered with, how exciting, tantrums and aggressions of various scales of this great, unpredictable force that assumes

it can throw its way anywhere where there is no NATO. So tell me, how exactly will you assure our safety? What is this NATO alternative you are advocating for? Have you considered asking us what we think of it? Or did you just decide, as you did many times in your history, and to many other countries you felt superior towards, that it will be you, and your leaders, who will be setting the cards on the table, and we just need to submit? Did you already take out your ruler to make straight lines on the map, except that this time it will be the map of the place where I grew up?

And this is beyond Personal is Political – what is most enraging is that the people doing the Westplaining are absolutely the same ones that will cry over Trump over Twitter, but will not lift a finger to get his yilk out! You are not some soldiers, you are cowards! And when you are a coward, the only self-respect you may have is some moral virtue, or superiority. It may get you followers, but it costs lives, it costs faith, it costs political disorientation, it reproduces docility. Antifascism is protecting people from individuals with structural power. Right now that is Putin. If you are protecting his hegemony over his vast and increasing empire, if you are What Abouting into helplessness, you are part of the aggressor. So pick up a weapon, or organise a fundraiser, or welcome a refugee, but even more preferably at this point – shut the fuuuuck up. Log out, touch grass, leave this war with people that actually know what they're fighting for. You're fighting for likes – it's humiliating – to the left in general, and to future generations who will be left demoralised, rather than inspired to fight for a world sans dictators. Yes, your leaders are some of them, so take care of taking them down. Sadly we seldom even trust the leaders you'd put in their place. This is the level of faith that you're losing. Look in the mirror, destroy the imperialist exceptionalist cop inside your head. Good luck.

Or, at the very least, learn how to pronounce our names properly. JFC.

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