

No collective responsibility

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On 24 February 2022, Russia launched her invasion of Ukraine, continuing the territorially limited war of 2014. By planning a swift and effective military intervention on a despised opponent who was judged to be weak, Russia entered a protracted armed conflict, which resulted in their military, political and moral disgrace of the aggressor. The brutalisation of the war is apparent. Residential districts, theatres, schools, kindergartens and hospitals were bombed, some towns were razed to the ground, passenger cars and buildings with visible “CHILDREN” signs were intentionally fired upon, civilians were murdered, women and children raped, and torture, looting and deportation were committed.

Russia’s aggression caused massive condemnation on a global scale, the result of which were economic sanctions that had not been seen before on this scale, especially by the countries of the core of the world economic and political system. They showed that Russia is not – contrary to the delusions of V. Lenin – part of the core, but merely an element of the semi-peripheries trying to oppose it. The sanctions also indicated that the real strength of states is their economic strength, while military power is only an appearance, especially so when it is a product of propaganda rather than reality.

Russia’s aggression caused an exodus of people from Ukraine. The largest number of refugees came to Poland, where over two million people arrived within two weeks, including 90% of women with children. In the city of Warsaw alone, 300,000 refugees arrived who, at the time of writing this text, constitute 15% of the city’s inhabitants. The influx of refugees met with massive help from millions of volunteers who took refugees under their roof, assisted in transport and operated at

border crossings, railway stations and places of collective accommodation. The scale of help provided by extraordinary ordinary people was astonishing. They offered refugees their own food and money or exchanged Ukrainian hryvnias (UHR) for Polish zlotys (PLN) at an overpriced rate (e.g. 1:1, comparing to the commercial rate of 1 UHR = 0.10 PLN).

Importantly, Russia's aggression met with massive support from Russian society, which was, however, declared by an authoritarian state using intrusive propaganda. Thus, for example, the Council of Rectors of Universities of Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast issued an allegiance to the President of Russia in support of the aggression (*Obrashchenie...*, 2022), referred to as a "special operation". In this context, one should appreciate the initiative of the Russian Academy of Sciences community who wrote an open letter protesting against the war unleashed by V. Putin against Ukraine (*Rosyjscy naukowcy...*, 2022). As of 10 April 2022, this letter was signed by ca 8,000 Russian scientists (*Otkrytoe...*, n.d.). It is also worth noting the active resistance of some Russian soldiers who either refused to participate in the war or even surrendered to the Ukrainians, and then formed the "Free Russia" Legion, fighting on the Ukrainian side (*Poddali się...*, 2022).

An element of the international anti-Russian sanctions was the massive suspension of cooperation with any Russian organisations and institutions, which also applies to scientific institutions. In this context, it should be stated that our journal "Przestrzeń Społeczna (Social Space)" has never had institutional cooperation with any organisation from Russia. However, it should be emphasized that we reject the principle of collective responsibility and, therefore, do not exclude anyone of our actual or potential collaborators and authors solely on the basis of their countries of origin or residence. For, as the Ukrainian film director Sergei Loznitsa stated, "those who shamelessly serve the regime should be boycotted. But condemning the entire Russian culture is [...] a senseless gesture" (*Rosjan...*, 2022). Therefore, we do not intend to demand a "certificate of political morality" from anyone, but we do intend to eliminate from our milieu those who openly or implicitly approve V. Putin's aggression. Indeed, we have always eliminated texts praising such actions. We share the position of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish

Academy of Sciences, in which “we wish to express our support and readiness to help the Russian academic community who expressed their opposition to the Russian attack on Ukraine and the related disinformation campaign addressed to Russian society” (*Uchwała...*, 2022). According to the deeply internalised, although rarely explicated, view in Polish society, we distinguish Russian (*ruskuyu*) culture from the Russian (*rossiyskoe*) state, which Russian nationalists confuse with Russophobia.

A Deputy Speaker of the Polish Senate after visiting the Ukrainian town of Bucha, where he saw the results of Russian war crimes, stated that he would not capitalise the words *Russia* and *Russians* from now on (*Michał Kamiński...*, 2022). He referred to the behaviour of some Polish humanists, who for some time after the Second World War wrote the words *Germany* and *Germans* in lower case characters (Kozłowski 2022), although such a solution was adopted in the Polish underground press during the German occupation. It was a manifestation of hatred and contempt not so much for the enemy as for the barbarian. The custom of spelling surnames in lower case letters as manifest contempt was described even earlier, in the novel by Ferenc Molnár (1927) from 1907 entitled “The Paul Street Boys”.

However, it is worth recalling the account of a Polish war correspondent, presented in the 1960s, who – while visiting one of the liberated German concentration camps at the end of the Second World War – pointed to individual examples of crimes, emphasizing in each case what wickedness the *Germans* committed. Then a man in a camp striped uniform approached him, saying: “*Ich bin auch Germans*” [*I am Germans too*], thus suggesting that stereotypical generalisations are not only harmful, but also pointless.

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that the present author cannot be drawn into the civilisation of collective responsibility and will make every effort not to get our journal “Przestrzeń Społeczna (Social Space)” similarly drawn in. The words of “Prayers at sunrise” (Gintrowski et al., 1992) are close to him: “but save me from hatred, save me from contempt, Lord”. However, even without being saved from it, you can avoid emotional violation of the principles of Polish spelling, and manifest your indignation by using – already existing or created ad hoc – pejorative names for Russians, Russia and Putin, while showing off your creative invention,

although scientific texts do not seem the best place for that. However, it is worth making an effort to break away from stereotypes, despite the fact that they play an important social function, as they help to organise the social world, even though by doing so they simplify its complexity.

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