
Our outrage is not just for the privileged

Support for Ukraine exposes our lack
of support elsewhere

Editor's notebook

By Savannah Parker

WHEN RUSSIA claimed it had embarked on a “special military operation” in Ukraine Feb. 24, what we saw looked suspiciously like an invasion.

According to Russian state media, the manoeuvre was intended to "demilitarize and denazify" the country. Western and European nations saw it as an attack on democracy.

Given our city's large population of ethnic Ukrainians, many of whom settled in the downtown area in the early 1900s, it wasn't surprising to see Edmontonians taking to the streets in a show of solidarity, Feb. 27.

In 1905, Ukrainian settlement in Edmonton increased with the arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway, a remnant of which can still be seen on 124th street as a conspicuous bump in the road.

The Boyle Street area in particular served as a community centre for Ukrainian newcomers. Along 97th street, you can still see the impressive Saint Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral, built in 1904. This area also had a Ukrainian bookshop, which was one of the city's first.

To this day, other important Ukrainian organizations continue to operate downtown, including the Ukrainian National Federation of Canada, which provides support to Ukrainian Canadians and Ukrainian army veterans, and St. John's Institute, originally a residence for post-secondary students of Ukrainian descent.

Many of these organizations were established with the intention of preserving Ukrainian culture and language, illustrating the powerful ties Ukrainians have to their origins.

Ukrainian settlers experienced their share of turmoil, prejudice, and even genocide. But, in Canada at least, they never had to fight the way people of colour did to preserve their culture.

This brings us to the current outpouring of support against the assault on Ukraine – which should be our model for how to react whenever *anyone* is faced with violence and aggression.

*Defending democracy
but very selectively*

Numerous wars have been waged in recent years with minimal outcry from the West, although other peoples have run the same risk of being overtaken by authoritarian rule. The argument for Ukraine is centred around defending a democratic nation; yet others have been left to perish in the fight for democracy.

The real issue appears to be that a predominantly white Christian nation has been occupied without Western and European consent.

Maybe the real horror for the West is that people perceived to be "just like us" can be ground under the heel of authoritarianism.

I am a Canadian with a Ukrainian grandfather who grew up in a largely Ukrainian rural community. I enjoy Ukrainian food and traditions at holidays. I attend weddings and funerals at Ukrainian churches. I can remember insults hurled at my family, and other Ukrainians in the community.

However, the support and coverage of this conflict has been lopsided.

As our screens are overwhelmed with images of Ukraine, war rages on in Syria. Refugees still languish in Turkish camps, with no nation willing to claim them. Bodies of Indigenous children continue to be found at the sites of residential schools. Muslim Canadians experience daily harassment and assault. The United States delivers near-daily air assaults on Somalia.

While support for Ukraine's autonomy during this occupation is important and understandable, we need to take a moment to consider the lack of coverage and support for issues plaguing marginalized communities all over the globe.

It's time for us to be outraged about all unnecessary human suffering – regardless of colour or ethnicity.

[Back to The Magpie](#)