**Guy Verhofstadt,** *on behalf of the ALDE Group***.** – Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Legutko why he doesn’t stay for the debate.

*(Mr Legutko left the Chamber)*

Why are you leaving, Mr Legutko? Because I have something to say to you. I have to say something to you. Your attack on Mr Lewandowski I find outrageous.

*(Interjections from the floor)*

If there is one sensible, reasonable, colleague of ours, sometimes even a little bit boring, then it is Mr Lewandowski. And to say that he has lost his senses, well, I think it is the Polish Government that has lost its senses and not Mr Lewandowski.

*(Applause)*

Mr President, on Saturday 60 000 fascists marched in the streets of Warsaw – neo-Nazis, white supremacists – and I’m not talking about Charlottesville in America, I’m talking about Warsaw, Poland, 300 km more or less from Auschwitz and Birkenau. Well, I have to tell you, I thought that it should never happen in Europe, and that it should never happen also in Poland; certainly not in Poland, because we do not have to give lessons to Poland. That’s not the point. It’s the place where, before Magna Carta, before *Habeas corpus*, there were free cities, a beacon of creativity and of freedom. It is the country that liberated itself from two authoritarianisms, from fascism and communism, and they did it alone.

And at the same time it is also, since their entrance into the European Union, a country that was really at the heart of Central and Eastern European democracy, and moreover also of economic growth, before Germany. So there is nothing to say about Poland – we are not attacking Poland. What we are attacking and what is being said is that over the last two years there has been a government, and behind that government there is a personality, Mr Kaczyński, who thinks that he can copy someone – and I apologise to the PPE Group – namely Mr Orbán, who also thinks that he has to establish illiberal states everywhere in the European Union. To copy Mr Orbán is, I think, not in the interests of Poland and Polish society and Polish citizens. And that is the point of our intervention today.

And unfortunately, in this case, we will ask you, Mr President, to activate Article 7 – and not, I have to tell you very clearly, to punish any Polish citizens. That is not the point. My proposal is even that, when we have sanctions, the European money should go directly to Polish cities, to Polish civil societies and to Polish citizens, because we can never allow Polish citizens to be the victims of this reactionary agenda of the Polish Government and of Mr Kaczyński.

*(Applause)*

*(The speaker declined to answer a blue-card question from Ms Gosiewska)*