

Interview with Resistance Committee

AFA Stockholm

24 November 2022

Can you give a brief summary of the fascist and antifascist movements in your country at the moment? How is it different from 10 years ago, and what is the prediction for the near future?

Well, the main fascist movement in Ukraine today is occupiers of the Russian state and its agents-satellites. This force represent authoritarian power fed with reactionary, chauvinist, imperialist ideology.

Of course, right-wing radicals exist also in Ukrainian society and therefore – “on Ukrainian side”. Currently they are represented a lot in the military, however despite of the myths spread by Kremlin propaganda right wingers in Ukraine by no way dominate and shape neither army nor society in general. So we need to take seriously occupiers as the dominant fascist threat.

At the same time wide range of Ukrainian right wingers starting with nationalists and up to real nazis are also on increase now. This is the misreaction on imperialist aggression. I.e. once again occupation policies of the Russian state are the main trigger of growing popularity of local nationalists and far-righters.

Antifascist camp is also not a monolyth here. We have a phenomenon of Soviet nostalgists and pro Putinists who mostly act as allies and try to instrumentalize a lot the brand of antifascism. This phenomenon is used by local right-wingers to discredit antifascism in general.

Real antifascists are represented by people of progressive and libertarian views. Our scene is less organized and numbered than our fascist vis-a-vis in this country, however in some big cities, such as, for example, Kiev, Kharkov, Lviv, etc. we manage to organize visible resistance against fascists.

As to historical perspectives – very big and dramatic point was Maidan uprising of 2014. Nationalists could promote well their agenda and gained influence within this popular uprising and because of that made a big step from marginality to mainstream. They developed even more using war situation and their active involvement in the fight against Russian State allowed them to secure certain place in Ukrainian society. However right-wingers failed to gain really considerable place in Ukrainian politics partly because they were corrupted by mainstream political forces and state institutions.

Maidan uprising was also a trigger of crisis within anti-authoritarian left. Because our movement could not effectively handle the challenge of massive popular uprising. However several

years before full-scale invasion has started this February we saw sort of renaissance of the movement – new initiatives, events, actions and organizational efforts.

Full-scale war is probably the biggest challenge we have faced on our way. We should find the way to present and build ourselves politically. We are in process. And Resistance Committee is a part of this effort.

For Swedish antifascists it's clear that our countries neoliberal economic development has been going hand in hand with a new surge in recruits for the Swedish fascist movement. Are there any similar connections to be made between the racism and fascism on the streets in your cities and the right-wing economic policies of the government in your country?

Far-right ideologies are widespread in “post-Soviet”, “post-Socialist” countries. The reasons are complex. Partly it is a reaction on decades of dictatorship of Soviet “communists”, partly of course it is the result of poverty in our countries.

Are you trying to develop new organizational forms and methods for confronting the new era of fascist movements, and if so, what role does physical violence as a tactic play for your group?

In a war situation we have to invent new organizational forms. Now there are two main branches: military and civil ones. In military branch, which the Resistance Committee is concentrated on, we contribute to the popular resistance against the imperialists. But our task is deeper than just to participate in a war. We try to find organizational forms within army structures to present ourselves as organized fighting libertarians – not just assimilate and disappear within military system. Among all other reasons – involvement in fight on the frontline is just necessary for any political force which wants to have a word in Ukraine today and tomorrow. It means to be together with the people in its ultimate resistance against the enslavement. Civil branch is concentrated on logistics support, humanitarian aid and media work. One of the most notable initiatives in civil branch is Solidarity Collectives.

In a war-torn country question of “physical violence” sounds absolutely differently. We are engaged in military conflict, which is completely another level or maybe even totally different thing than a street fight. So it is mere not about “physical violence”, but about legitimate force against extremely violent and oppressive enemy. As we see, it corresponds a lot with the concept of self-defense promoted by Kurdish revolutionary movement.

Keeping the right-wing offensive going through Europe in mind, where does the antifascist movement in your country get its membership from (for example recruiting from working class neighbourhoods, from football culture etc)? How is the balance between newer younger people and older activists?

It seems, important role for recruiting is still played by punk/hardcore/vegan/straight edge, etc. subcultures. Antifascist and libertarian ideas are definitely attractive to young intellectuals resistant to nationalism and xenophobia. Also our natural allies are groups (especially of young people) who are subject for far right street violence (LGBT ppl, etc.). However all this looks like pre- full scale war picture. It seems for these 8 months we rather use our old reserves than recruit people. New ways are to be discovered.

Fascist and antifascist attitudes within countries and cities tend to be based on strictly geographical lines. In Sweden for example, the southern districts with the exception of Malmö is generally the most xenophobic, while the northern parts of

the country tend to be more left-leaning. Do you have any fascist and antifascist strongholds within your cities?

Usually it is believed that Western part of the country is historically more conservative and nationalist. It is not that easy to say, how much it is actual for now. Especially after Maidan. Many right wing radicals are settled in big industrial cities which are located mostly in the East and South of the country. Even more important that in Ukraine exists ideology which sometimes mistaken as an “alternative” to Ukrainian nationalism – this is the mix of Soviet nostalgia and pro-Russian state sentiment which use the banner of antifascism but actually is also right wing and reactionary current. This ideology is usually attributed to Eastern and Southern cities, but it is shared by absolute minority of locals (we need to specify this not to let anybody space to speculate on legitimization of Russian intervention).

About neighborhoods there is one bright example – historical Podil neighborhood in Kiev. This is hipster/creative people/youth area of the capital city, with bars, rave, party points. It is an attraction place for very different groups of youth and also a target for systematic fascist attacks. In 2021 there were a lot of confrontation against them. So, to some extent, Podil is if not stronghold but at least a node of antifascist resistance.

How does the cooperation between the antifascist groups and the broader left-wing movement look like? Are there any connections to parliamentary groups, unions, workplaces, environmental organizations etc?

We can say that here is the lack of connection and communication between different antifascist groups, however among us there are people involved in Feminist and Trade-unionist activities. At the moment we keep distance from parliamentary politics.

To what degree are antifascists in your country persecuted by the police and the legal system, in comparison to fascists? Are there any antifascists serving prison-time at the moment, and if so, how can antifascists in other countries help?

It seems legitimate to say that there is a lot of impunity for fascist criminal activities in Ukraine. However we can't say that there is strong repressions against us as well. Ukrainian authorities tried to trace anarchists after certain direct actions (they made several interrogations and house raids), but unsuccessfully.

In 2019 they've deported Belarusian anarchist exile Alexander Franzkevich back to Belarus. In 2020 SBU (Ukrainian secret service) tried to deport another Belarusian anarchist exile – Alexey Bolenkov. But it was stopped by solidarity and kegal effort. It looks like there is no libertarian or antifascist prisoners in Ukraine at the moment.

What channels are you using to spread information? How can people come in contact with you?

Mostly we use Instagram: www.instagram.com

Telegram: <https://t.me/theblackheadquarter>

Twitter: twitter.com

Linktree, to keep our main publications together: linktr.ee

Finally, what gives antifascists in your area hope?

The biggest hope is given by disobedient and liberty-loving spirit of the people of Ukraine. There is a lot of spontaneous anarchism in local people. And as this war clearly shows there is a lot of will for resistance against oppression.

Revolutionary greetings,
Resistance Committee

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