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When the exhaustion of concepts intensifies

Anarchistische Büchermesse Berlin-Kreuzberg,
The Friends of the Class War

2024

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As we are unfortunately repeatedly confronted with groups that support the Ukrainian side in the war between Russia and the Ukraine from an allegedly “anarchist” position, and as an article appeared in April (When ideology gets in the way of solidarity) in which ABC-Belarus was surprised that we described them as supporters of the war and therefore we did not invite them to the bookfair, here are a few words from us. More than once we have had the dubious pleasure of being involved in discussions with people who call themselves “anarchists” and supporters of the Ukrainian side in the Russian-Ukrainian war, people who are also referred to by some as anarcho-militarists, anarcho-nationalists, NATO anarchists and the like – specifically, we are talking about ABC-Belarus, ABC-Dresden, Operation Solidarity/Solidarity Collective and all groups that support the war – whereby it should be noted that we personally deny that they are anarchists as a matter of course. Among other things, it has been shown that, contrary to their claim to seek debate, they do not do so, but instead skillfully

ignore every counter-argument and move deftly at a level that can sometimes be confidently described as populist and statist. What they are looking for is an approval and anyone who doesn't give it to them is then accused of Putinism, Westplaining, etc. And even if their arguments have changed over the course of time and certainly also due to the course of the war in the Ukraine, they are still generally repeated again and again. In the following lines, we will address these arguments, as they have been expressed to us and in some cases published, and explain once again why these groups support the war and why we do not consider them as anarchist comrades, despite all the praiseworthy and important work they do and have done in the field of prisoner support.

It is striking that these nationalists in anarchist garb are constantly using emotional arguments. The suffering of the Ukrainian population and the tragic individual fates of fallen soldiers (perhaps also female soldiers – so far, we have only heard or read reports about male soldiers), who are said to had been anarchists at some point in their lives, are described at length, but it is difficult to verify all this and it basically doesn't matter. The point is rather that the gruesome reality of war is portrayed here, and indeed of any war. It would certainly be possible to find tragic stories about Russian casualties who enlisted because of their poverty or about ethnic Russians living in Ukraine (which, according to some of these people, do not even exist, although the Ukrainian government still counted 17.2% Russians in the total population in 2001¹ – so either this is simply a case of questionable ignorance or ignoring the facts, or will they possibly also describe such sources as Russian propaganda and disinformation?) who were massacred, tortured and killed as alleged spies and collaborators. Are their lives less valuable? Or are we now going to start counting the dead in

¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20111217151026/http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/> Incidentally, the CIA's "World Fact Book" also gives the same figure.

Ukrainians than by people who see themselves as Russians? We clearly say no, this is not what we are fighting for and if others want to do it because they think it is right, let them do it, but we will not support them or give them a platform because they are acting against basic anarchist principles. Because the conflict is not between right and left, but between "for the State" and "against the State" and as for anarchists it is very clear to us which side we are on. This does not make us ideologues or sectarians, as we are so often accused of being, but advocates of a clear and consistent anarchism that must not be watered down by the exhaustion of concepts and arbitrariness, otherwise anarchism will ultimately lose all its meaning and will not only disappear into insignificance for good, but will take on the kind of perverted forms and excesses that we can observe in groups such as ABC-Belarus, ABC-Dresden, etc.

Long live the betrayal of the country!

For anarchy

only talk of the ignorance with which they are met and the fact that the specific situation, regional history and conditions are allegedly not sufficiently included in analyses. But what are these particularities that lead them to think that it is something of an “anarchist duty” to support the Ukraine in this war, this is something they remain silent about. And how did it come about that all these “anarchists” suddenly became blossoming patriots overnight? We don’t know and we won’t get an answer, but it doesn’t matter how or why it happened. What is much more crucial and worrying is that it happened and that it is happening now. Because all the other anarchist and revolutionary groups in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, who have a different point of view and a different attitude to these saber-wielding war supporters, could not be trusted anymore. Well, that is difficult to verify, but at least in some cases it seems to us to be more defamation and denunciation (should they all be shot?) than serious advice and note. Especially as some of the things published by these groups have now also been adopted or confirmed by the “anarchist” militarists... We don’t want to go into the argument that the army now has a revolutionary potential, as has been shown historically in the formation of soldiers’ councils. That a handful of anarchists could awaken this potential, if it exists at all, seems illusory to us and this illusion is downright dangerous when we consider the price that is paid for it. Let us just briefly recall what the goals of these historical soldiers’ councils were, namely to put an end to the capitalist war and capitalist peace in a revolutionary way and not to wage war in a self-organized way on the side of a nation-State and get killed in the process.

For us as anarchists, all wars are capitalist wars and wars of capital. The only thing that wars produce are losers, death, misery and a pile of profit in the pockets of the capitalists. It is necessary to fight both capitalist war and capitalist peace, because both are only two sides of the same coin. After all, what do these “anarchist” warriors in Ukraine want to fight for? Defending the capitalist normal state because it is so much better to be exploited and oppressed by

wars and which side has the most, that is to say the good guys, the side worth supporting? And do they seriously want us to believe that the Ukrainian army is the only army in the world to be composed only of blameless men and women? Well, at least with the Azov brigade they don’t seem to deny their fascist orientation, but they relativize it and their training camps were the only ones that were easily accessible, what made out of them actually quite correct comrades to fight side by side with. After all, they have the same nationalist goals and, as with all nationalism, it goes without saying the other nation must be disparaged, in this case the “fascist” aggressor Russia and therefore all Russians in the same time. That is as for the solidarity that is so loudly demanded by these people, but which stops at national borders. And ignoring or even denying the presence of fascists in the Ukrainian government also speaks for itself...

In addition, the cruelty of the Russian soldiers is emphasized, who are all ruthless murderers, sadists and fascists whose only goal is to kill all Ukrainians. There would be no forced recruitment in Russia because it would not be necessary, as the Russian soldiers would all go to war voluntarily because they get money for it. Since these self-proclaimed “anarchists” don’t seem to have realized it yet and just to be clear: Most people do the disgusting profession of soldiering because it pays money. You don’t have to be a professor of linguistics to realize that the word *soldier* derives from *soldo* [= the soldier’s pay] (which in turn derives from *solidus*, a Byzantine coin) and this *soldo*, as we all know, is simply another word for payment or remuneration for a particular service. The job title alone therefore implies that someone is doing something for which he or she receives money. And the fact that in all armies it is primarily those from the poorest backgrounds who, seeing no other way of earning money legally, make up the majority of ordinary soldiers, those who are the first to die, should point out that we can only speak of voluntary service to a limited extent. The fact that the Russian army is also recruited from migrants hoping to improve their res-

idence status or naturalization and from prisoners, which is also the case in the Ukrainian army, also plays a not insignificant role in this question.

And in all of this, they do not seem to be concerned at all with alleviating the suffering of people in war zones, as they like to claim ostensibly. If this was the case, they would have to consistently call for anarchist auxiliary battalions for all war zones in the world, because we should show solidarity with all oppressed people, not least with those who suffer directly from the barbaric wars of capital. But no, for them only the suffering on the Ukrainian side counts. It becomes particularly absurd when it is even admitted in the meantime that this war can probably no longer be won for the Ukraine and that recruitment on the Ukrainian side is increasingly being resisted (because although Ukrainians are supposedly all going to war voluntarily for freedom, there is still forced recruitment and corresponding resistance to it), but all “anarchists” in Ukraine are firmly convinced that they must continue to fight now, because if Russia wins this war, it will mean the death of the anarchist movement in the region. We reject this logic that one way or another the downfall is imminent and that is why we are now supporting some kind of suicidal action, as a result of which only people will die and lose their children, parents and friends. Because the end of anarchist movements in certain regions had happened many times in the past and it is neither a new phenomenon nor a total downfall; in such cases, these movements have to be rebuilt, as it happened time and again in history. The humanity to which they appeal and which they require from anarchists all over the world, especially in the form of monetary donations, is only shown very selectively; the Russian soldiers, turned into murderers by capitalism, do not seem worthy of humanity to them, their deaths are irrelevant. The Russians have always hated the Ukrainians for centuries... Sometimes even we are astonished by so much undifferentiated thinking and no longer know what else to write.

On May 1, 2023 in Dresden, one could hear, among other things, the following: “We should call for the Ukrainian population to be armed to the teeth so that thousands of bullets are fired from every window or door against the occupiers and their collaborators. If many in the West are not willing to fight for freedom – then so be it, but at least supporting those who are willing to do so is a duty that rests on the shoulders of everyone in the so-called first world.”² And after this martial war cry, which we have heard too often in this way and in similar forms from warmongers at all times and in all places in the world, are they really still surprised that we write that they support the war? And what a meaningless and purely agitational use of the term freedom. What freedom are they fighting for? Capitalist freedom? Freedom to die for the seemingly kinder, more humane or even more “anarchistic” oppressor, to push the exhaustion of concepts to the extreme? In return, they want to kill “collaborators” and “occupiers”, assuming that the thousands of bullets hit them. Who is considered a collaborator? People who desert, who evade recruitment? All people who do not support Ukraine? Once again, the nationalist component oozes from the word occupier. But since actions are not important, only names count, they can claim they are not nationalists because they don’t call themselves so. And the whole thing is paired with banners and slogans that reek of glory and honor to the fallen and the cult of martyrdom.

We still don’t know why they think it has anything to do with anarchism to support one side in a war between two capitalist States or to defend one’s homeland, whatever it is supposed to be. The proletariat has no homeland, and certainly none that it should defend against another nation-State. In the above-mentioned article, we also find no answer to the question they formulated themselves, “Does ABC-Belarus support the war in Ukraine?” There is

² <https://abcedd.org/2023/05/02/1-mai-in-dresden-internationale-solidaritat/>