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Anarchists on the Front Line Against Russia's War

Anonymous

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July 2023

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- Ukraine Solidarity Campaign seeks to organise solidarity and provide information in support of the Ukrainian labour movement
- Help War Victims Ukraine, a volunteer network to support victims of the war, as examples the one who lost relatives or comrades or the one who had to flee.
- Lviv Vegan Kitchen serves free vegan meals for refugees and other people suffering from russian aggression in Ukraine
- Helping to Leave helps to evacuate people from war effected areas.

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“Yes, I would like to. I want these people to know that there are those who disagree, there are people [in Russia] who do not want a war with Ukraine or any war at all. I hope that soon no one will suffer because of shit that Putin started. The Ukrainians do a good job of liberating their territories, destroying Russian troops. And I think everything will work out. Sooner or later. Ukrainians are very strong, motivated people and will defend their territory to the end. I respect them for that. I would have done the same in their place.”

If you would like to get more informations or support anarchists in the anti-war resistance, the following groups are doing great work:

- Resistance Committee, the united anti-authoritarian forces of Ukraine
- BOAK, anarchist group fighting russian state in and outside Russia
- Solidarity Collectives, an anti-authoritarian volunteer network that unites several individual and organizational grassroots initiatives united to help the Ukrainian resistance movement and people affected by the Russian invasion
- Good Night Imperial Pride, a solidarity campaign for antiauthoritarian comrades participating in the fight for liberation of Ukraine from the Russian imperial invasion and occupation.
- Cars of Hope Wuppertal, a selforganized initiative to support people on the EU borders and inside ukraine with humanitarian aid and report about the situation.

mate, it is illegal. (...) We annexed Crimea in 2014, and I already said at that moment that it was all in vain. Crimea is not ours and never will be. There will be consequences. And so it happened. It is very hurtful for me to realize that people are dying — civilians are dying, those who do not want to fight, but those that were conscripted, also die. I wanted to make some kind of call for people to start rejecting this war, I wanted to influence the situation, to do something to stop all this, or at least weaken [Russian troops]. Therefore, I set fire to the military registration and enlistment office of the city of Berezovsky.” He explains that he acted spontaneously, without escape plan but without fear. “I was aware that I would have to face the consequences. I understood that even if I died in prison, my actions would still affect the course of events.”

Alexey was unlucky because the traffic cops were passing by at that time and saw him, leading to his arrest. Alexey elaborates on how such actions can influence the decision of the authorities: “After my action was carried out, Putin admitted on Channel One that conscripts were stationed in the special military operation zone, and [reported] that they would be withdrawn from there. And those who sent them there will be punished. It was after my arson he said that. I was the third one in Russia who set fire to the recruiting office, and this is [an example of how] several people can influence [the circumstances] to save guys like us, people of the same age. [Conscripts] didn’t die in the war, they didn’t kill anyone, they were simply transferred back to Russia, leaving only contract soldiers [in the war zone].” He talks about the horrendous condition in the prison, the torture but also the support of the Anarchist Black Cross and the letters he received. He explains the pressure from his relatives who accused him of acting stupidly, but how this did not undermine his conviction that he did the right thing by saving people’s lives.

Alexey concludes with these words addressed to people in Ukraine:

WHY THIS BROCHURE?

The St-Imier Congress marked the beginning of an organized anarchist movement. The comrades who gathered in St-Imier in 1872 drew up a strategy on how to achieve federalism. Their plan was to conduct an economic struggle outside the institutions to take over the means of production and collectivize them.

150 years later, many of us share the aim of a society organized horizontally and from the bottom-up, a direct or radical democracy made up of federated collectives. The kind of strategy we need to achieve these goals needs to be discussed. In a world that is changing faster and faster and propulsating us from a crisis to the next is making it difficult for us to draw a plan according to each new situation. Not having a plan in turn makes it difficult to see the horizon of the society we want to build and creates hopelessness and fatigue. But violent crisis are creating breaches in the system and opportunities for those who are prepared to take them.

The most recent example is the Rojava revolution where revolutionary groups who were organized in the region since decades were able to take over the institutions when the Syrian state collapsed during the civil war. A new society based on direct democracy, gender liberation and ecology bloomed in the middle of the fight against ISIS and the Turkish state.

The Russian war of aggression on Ukraine not only worsens the reality of life of the affected population but also changes a global balance of power between the imperialist blocs. Anarchists take their role on both sides of the front and fight against the war with all means.

In Russia, they are at the heart of the Russian partisan antiwar movement. BOAK (The Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists) are known for their effective sabotaging of railways, disrupting trains carrying ammunition to Russia’s military. They took responsibility for arson attacks against military commissariat registration and enlistment offices. They are able to organize

highly illegal actions underground and be very open and easily reachable at the same time. BOAK is one of the most organized and effective militant anarchist organization globally. They found ways to keep fighting under extreme conditions of repression. They fight because they know they can win, they know they can influence the turn of events. Their very existence is creating hope for other anarchists all over the world.

For anarchists in Ukraine it was clear since the Russian invasion and occupation in 2014 that a further escalation of the war was to be feared. Russian imperialism was not underestimated and so anarchists began to organize even before the war escalated again. Since the military invasion in February 2022, anarchists have been working to build an anti-authoritarian military unit and develop a path of resistance away from nationalism. They believe that the anarchist project cannot be offered to people from a safe distance, but must be built through participation in the battlefield. Parallel to the armed resistance, they organize humanitarian aid and support for refugees and deserters.

This brochure is an attempt to amplify the voices of our comrades on the frontline in the resistance against Russian invasion. It is also an attempt to provide anarchists here information about their struggle which might be useful for us as we might face equally difficult conditions in the future with the rise of the right wing and fascism in Europe. We hope this can contribute to a broader discussion how we are planning to create the world we would like to live in.

ANARCHIST RESISTANCE IN RUSSIA

BOAK stands for Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists and was founded in Russia in 2018. The revolutionary organization has as its goal the abolition of state authority and the creation of a self-governing society with a mode of production that is according

offensive of February 24, 2022. Among the political prisoners are anarchists, opposition politicians as well as many artists, human rights activists and media activists.

We translated and summarized a long interview given by anarchist political prisoner Alexey Rozhkov to Mediazona while in exile in Kyrgyzstan.

Alexey is from Berezovsky, Russia. He decided to attack a recruiting office with Molotov cocktails on March 11, 2022, just a few days after the launch of Russia's new war offensive against Ukraine. He was caught and put in pre-trial detention for 6 months. After that he was released for a short time and fled to Kyrgyzstan to apply for political asylum. However, he was tracked down there at the end of May 2023 and illegally deported back to Russia. The initial charges of "destruction of foreign property" he was facing were converted to "terrorist attack". He is now detained and facing a very long prison sentence.

Before the 24 of february 2022 (the beginning of the new Russian invasion), Alexey was living in Berezovsky in Russia. He was working as a sales assistant in an electronics store. He was playing in a band and started recoding an album. He talks about his interest in politics: *"I became interested in politics at the age of 14. My views have changed over time. Previously, it was somewhat of a democrat [liberal], or something, more legalistic. Now I can call myself a left-wing anarchist. I have always agitated to open people's eyes, to see what is happening with the country. For example with the standard of living. Talked with my family and acquaintances, You know, friends and even there are these strangers. large banners, I drew leaflets, spray-painted. advertising signs? At night, I would climb on them and painted graffiti "Putin is a thief." At that time, he was just a thief. And now, of course, he is not just a thief, but also a murderer. I drew on these billboards at night so that people would start asking questions and come to the same opinion."*

He explains how the war sunk him into depression, constantly flipping through social media. *"What is happening now is illegiti-*

close to the Kremlin. This position is shameful: Total, which profited from climate chaos, is now illustrating itself as a war profiteer.”

The London Makhnovists have liberated the property of Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska. They intended to use the luxury mansion to host refugees from all nations and all ethnicities. In a statement they write: “ We are anarchists, we occupy this property in protest against Putin and his world. Do we need to remind you what Putin sucks? The invasion of Ukraine is only the last episode in a long series, from the support of Assad in Syria to concentration camps for LBGT+ people, ecocides, massive wealth inequality, brutal repression of political opponents and so on. In occupying this mansion, we want to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine, but also the people of Russia who never agreed to this madness. As always with wars, empires benefit and common people pay the price.”

In Austria, on Lake Attersee, a group of anarchists occupied the property of former Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, known friend of Putin.

In Switzerland, a group of activists invited themselves in the Russian company Solway’s office in Zoug, putting up banners. They held a speech explaining this was in solidarity with the people protesting in Guatemala against land theft, forced evictions and environmental pollution.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN RUSSIA

Anyone who actively speaks out against the war in Russia quickly ends up in prison. All it takes is a white, empty banner to be imprisoned, not to mention being caught spraying graffiti, demonstrating, or engaging in sabotage. In addition, many people are also imprisoned because of their social media activities. Currently, there are about 400 political prisoners in Russia. The vast majority of them have been imprisoned since the new war

to needs. The war between Russia and Ukraine creates a breach that opens up possibilities for change. However BOAK are fully aware that the state and all its actors are ready to defend the current order with violence so they are prepared for confrontations. This preparation includes education about strategy and tactics, the building of knowledge transfer, training with weapons and explosives as well as promoting one’s own culture.

The organization and its cells have carried out several effective acts of sabotage and direct action against war actors inside Russia. Several railroad tracks were blown up and telecommunications antennas were torched.

However, it is not only important to them to carry out their own actions, sharing their knowledge is also a central point of their work. Mistakes made or possible improvements are also reported after actions. They make very rare knowledge which has often been falsified by repressive organs, accessible on their website. So you can ask a lot of knowledge there about a wide variety of questions, which a militant anarchist will ask him: herself again and again. The range goes from recognizing surveillance measures to the own production of explosive substances. Of course, all of this must be seen in the context of Russian conditions and would have to be adapted for other regions if there is interest and need for it.

This transfer of knowledge made BOAK a reliable source of information during the war. Many militants who otherwise would not have had access to such information could educate themselves, prepare and carry out their actions with the greatest possible caution and a maximum effect on the target.

With these actions during an intense war and under a dictatorial regime, BOAK members make a great contribution to the anarchist movement of the twenty-first century. The actions carried out by BOAK inside Russia not only have a real and direct effect on the war machine. They also give hope and show that even under these very repressive conditions it is possible to make a difference and to live up to one’s role as a revolutionary anarchist. And last

but not least, a look at the activities of BOAK is also of great importance for western anarchists and can lead to new inspiration and motivation.

“I want to remind all pessimists that there are no “objective” reasons for considering the social revolution and the triumph of anti-authoritarian ideas to be reserved for an indefinitely distant future. The speed and unpredictability of social change in the modern world teaches us one important lesson: everything is possible. Including freedom and justice.” Dmitry Petrov, a member of BOAK and the Resistance Committee

INTERVIEW WITH BOAK

During the St-Ilmier Congress in 1872, four resolutions were adopted: the 1st affirmed the principles of autonomy and federalism, the 2nd concluded a pact of solidarity and mutual defence between organizations, the 3rd affirmed that social revolution could only be built outside bourgeois politics, and the 4th decided to collect statistics on working conditions in order to inform resistance on a broad scale.

150 years after this founding congress, what should our resolutions be to lead the way to social revolution? In order to sketch out some answers, we contacted one of the anarchist organizations waging a decisive struggle today: Russia’s BOAK.

How can we define the actors of the social revolution?

This is not a simple question, and there is no clear answer today. The main protest movements in the region (in Russia in 2011, Ukraine in 2014, and Belarus 2020) have not revealed the existence of a specific social group, but rather a broad cross-section of society, people disempowered over their lives and dissatisfied with the status-quo. Clearly, young people play an important role in the social struggle.

And Switzerland is no small player: as much as 75% of Russian coal and 50–60% of Russian oil are traded in Switzerland. Glencore, the Zug based company has increased its profits from 846% in 2022 as compared to the same period the year before. These profits are largely the result of coal trading. The Russo-Swiss company Solway, also based in Zug is one of the biggest exploiter of nickel mines worldwide. Solway is infamous for its outrageous use of violence in Guatemala where people have been protesting against the company’s land grabbing and environmental pollution.

The opacity of the Swiss banking system and the voluntary absence of regulations have been enabling hundreds of such companies to enrich themselves without suffering much sanctions. This system that is enabling Switzerland to accumulate wealth by means of exploitation is also one of the reasons why Swiss people are better-off economically than people in most other parts of the world.

It is upon us to take the responsibility in our own hands to expose and sanction these warmongers. From the safety of our homes, our main role should not be to criticize or give our opinion on how the people in Russia and Ukraine should resist and by which means. We should rather look to them to find answers as to how to support their struggle. In their answers to our interview, talking about international solidarity, BOAK mention the importance of spreading information about acts of resistance, supporting striking comrades as well as political prisoners as well as more direct involvement as internationalists. Their targeting of logistical points and infrastructure of the war machine can inspire us. And as they explain, any means of struggles can be adopted, as long as it is with “total commitment, creativity and discipline”.

In France, activists have targeted the energy company Total for its toxic links with Putin’s regime. They repainted the front doors black. They explain that Total “persists in showing a criminal firmness by clinging to its Russian assets and its business with oligarchs

the image of the old, that is for those who seek to recreate the savagery of authoritarianism produced by those autocrats of, fascists under a variety of names. In our hands there is a world to win and a fight which requires great sacrifice however the alternative is not an option. For us and everybody else who faces the shadow of putinist aggression there is only victory or death. Love and struggle”

Cooper had joined the Marines to acquire self-defence training and prepare to become an internationalist volunteer. In November 2022, he joined the Foreign Legion in Ukraine and was due to return home in March, but decided to continue fighting with his comrades in the Resistance Committee.

Cooper had campaigned against police violence and fascism since his youth, notably through his involvement in The Rhizome House social centre. He was also active in Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, a disaster relief network based on the principles of solidarity, mutual aid and autonomous direct action. Cooper, Finbar and Dmitry are examples of tireless, consistent militants capable of overcoming the difficulties and contradictions inherent in the struggle. By drawing inspiration from them and carrying on their struggles, we continue to bring them to life.

INTERNATIONAL ANTIWAR ACTIONS

Switzerland is well known as a rear-base, a safe heaven for war profiteers. This special role has first been exposed with the washing of nazi's money. The war in Ukraine represents another opportunity for war mongers to fill their pockets. The NGO Public Eye has conducted extended investigation, showing how two main actors, the commodity traders and the financial traders are financing Putin's war. A wall of shame of Russian Oligarchs who have been able to register their businesses in Switzerland, evading all sanctions is available on their website along with their locations.

Similarly, a higher level of education could contribute to dissatisfaction with the existing order. We see a potential for protest and revolt among all the underprivileged (have-nots), in the great mass of the oppressed. Which particular social group will be at the vanguard of the future revolution, or whether it will be a mixture of all, remains to be seen.

Strikes were the anarchists' main tool in the 1870s. What are your methods of action?

Our main method is direct action and guerrilla warfare. These means are an authentic form of struggle against oppression. What's more, they are clearly suited to the overtly violent nature of the regimes in Russia and Belarus, which will not give up power through compromise. At the same time, we respect all the means of struggle that our anarchist comrades choose to adopt. The most important thing is that people take their cause seriously and don't pretend. With total commitment, creativity and discipline. Whether it's trade unionism, partisan anarchism or something entirely different.

That popular uprisings have taken place in your region in recent years and what were their causes?

The most important popular movements that have taken place in our region in recent times are the Maidan uprising (Ukraine) in 2014 and the protests in Belarus in 2020. These are two very different societies, but in both cases the cause was power's disregard for the dignity of ordinary people.

In the first case, it was the immoral actions of Yanukovich and the beating of peacefully protesting students. In the second case, it was the open fraud of the elections and an extreme degree of dissatisfaction with Lukashenko's obsolete authoritarian regime. Both events were historic turning points, demonstrating the potential for action and resistance of the peoples of Eastern Europe.

In 1872, global capitalism was in its infancy. Today, it's heading towards the wall. This means new dangers, but also opportunities. How can we take advantage of this situation?

Unfortunately, we don't know exactly how close capitalism is to its end, but a certain socio-economic crisis of the global system can be observed. We need to follow the old principle of "Think globally, act locally". One of the best examples of this approach is the revolution in Kurdistan. Here, an ambitious revolutionary organization was able to implement a process of social transformation in a limited territory and set an example for the world. We need to form our own movements and organizations, to prove that we can be political activists and revolutionaries. Find a way to resonate in people's hearts. The global crisis is a challenge for us all, a test for our movement, which must finally prove that it is a serious force.

What do you see as the main responsibilities in terms of international solidarity and mutual defence?

We believe that in an undertaking such as the transformation of the world system in an anti-authoritarian and anti-exploitative direction, mutual support and solidarity are indispensable. Even if the faces of capitalism and the methods of oppression differ from region to region, we are all fighters for the liberation of peoples, and we need mutual support. That's why we believe that the left worldwide must seek and find ways to put this solidarity into practice.

Support in the field of information, disseminating information about acts and methods of resistance is very important, as it encourages more and more people to join the struggle and shows our strength and unity. Financial support — which active groups need for gas and oil, strike organization and support for strikers. Support for imprisoned comrades and their families — who must not be left alone.

But also direct help in preparing for the struggle (providing accommodation in a safe place where partisans can exchange experiences and skills and then return to their respective regions to re-light the flame of struggle) and taking part in liberation struggles in a spirit of mutual aid, as the Internationalist Brigades did in Spain, as the Internationalist Brigades are doing in Kurdistan, and

and I wasn't happy about that. When I researched the efforts being made in Rojava to combat sectarianism and misogyny and promote a form of democracy with a far greater depth than we know in Europe, I saw that the fight here was not just about the current emergency situation. After that, it was just a matter of deciding how I could help. I thought for a long time about that."

Finbar has also fought against the construction of a gas pipeline in Ireland with the Shell to Sea campaign. He sang outside the prison where another Shell to Sea activist was being held. He also went to the Greek island of Kos to help migrants. He had also composed a song in tribute to this struggle, 'The lovely Glengad Strand'. An excerpt of the lyrics is reproduced here:

"and a roar down from the hillside came a « hurrah le Shell chun Sdile »¹ now that battle we did win it well but our long war it still goes on it's been forced on us by gangsters who know the value of nothing sing loud the name of Shell to Sea our staunch and stalwart band for when needs be again we'll join to defend the lovely Glengad Strand"

Cooper Andrews, Harris

Cooper Andrews or Harris is a black autonomist activist from the United States. In the words of his mother: "*He had a rare gift for empathy and would stay up late into the night, listening to those in need of a friendly ear.*"

She set up a foundation to raise money for causes that were close to Cooper's heart.

As for the reasons of his involvement in Ukraine, he explains: "*A victory here for Putin will not only plunge this region into a dark period of authoritarianism from which there will be no escape, but it will also represent a victory for those who seek to recast the world in*

¹ « hurrah for Shell to Sea » in Irish

own stun grenades. At night, when many Belarusians were resting, Leshy [Dmitry] and other comrades took to the streets of Minsk and destroyed the surveillance cameras that played an important role in the infrastructure of repression...”

Dmitry has written numerous analytical texts, including an article entitled “The Mission of Anarchism in the Modern World”, translated and published by Crimethinc. In it, he writes: “*The modern world is characterized by the sleep of reason and the suppression of deep feelings, replaced by momentary, externally controlled desires. This state is repugnant to human nature; it causes dissatisfaction, followed by a longing for something different.*” He concludes with: “*An organized revolutionary struggle is the path by which we will reach the goal outlined in this text. Victory is possible—and therefore, we must win.*”

Dmitry’s life is a testimony to how it is possible to continue the organized struggle even under the most difficult conditions.

Finbar Cafferkey, Ciya Demhat

Finbar or heval Ciya Demhat is described as “*a man of few words, whose every word was worth listening to*”. When the war started, he joined the anti-authoritarian volunteers in Ukraine, delivering humanitarian aid and vehicles to the front lines. Unable to bear seeing the people he was trying to help die, he finally decided to enlist at the front. His friend Davide Grasso writes in a Facebook post: “*Ciya faced those contradictions to change the world. Instead of leaving all efforts against Putin’s invasion to the neo-liberals or the far right, he and his comrades worked to develop a libertarian alternative. To this end they sacrificed everything.*”

Before that, Finbar took part in the liberation of Raqqa from ISIS’s grip as part of the YPG. He explains his reasons for leaving for Rojava in an interview entitled “Pride, Tinged With Sadness”. Here’s an extract: “*As an EU citizen, this made me complicit in the horrors perpetrated by the Islamic State in the territory it controls,*

as the Anarchist Internationalist Brigades are currently doing in the Ukraine.

If it were possible to organize a survey among exploited people in your area, what 3 questions would you ask them?

- What would a just society be like for you?
- What do you dislike most about the current order of things?
- What would make you risk your usual peaceful life and choose to fight?

IN MEMORY OF ANARCHIST INTERNATIONALISTS WHO FELL IN UKRAINE

Anarchists from different parts of the world decided to take part in the resistance against the Russian invasion by joining the Resistance Committee. Three of them fell on April 19, 2023. This text has been written in their memory by the Rojava Committee of the Jura region. It retraces their commitments and the reasons why they decided to join the Resistance Committee.

On April 19, 2023, three internationalists: Dmitry Petrov, Cooper Andrews and Finbar Cafferkey, fell in Ukraine, fighting against Russian imperialism. All three were members of the Resistance Committee, an anti-fascist unit whose manifesto reads: “*Our task: to unite efforts of fighters against authoritarianism for the sake of effective struggle for our ideals and values. We aspire to influence the future of Ukraine and the whole region, to protect the freedoms which already exist and to contribute to their extension.*”

Dmitry and Finbar had participated in the defence of the Rojava revolution. Cooper, Finbar and Dmitry had all spent decades fighting on various fronts. They were convinced that social revolution was a tangible dream. They made a conscious decision to risk their

lives, knowing that this struggle would require many sacrifices. For people around the world who share their dreams, who are fighting oppression, it's important to study their stories, to understand their perspectives and to be inspired by them.

Emmett Doyle honours them with the song "In Bakhmut town", recorded just a few days after their death. Here is an extract of the lyrics:

"Oh come you who love freedom and a tale I'll have
you hear
Of comrades who came to Ukraine, as foreign volun-
teers
From Russia and America, Ireland and all around-
And side by side, they fought and died, on the streets
of Bakhmut town"

Dmitry Petrov, Ilya Leshy, "Seva", "Lev", Fil Kuznetsov

Dmitry Petrov, Ilya Leshy, "Seva", "Lev", Fil Kuznetsov, is a Russian anarchist, co-founder of the Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists (BOAK), which carries out sabotage actions against military infrastructure in Russia. In BOAK's words: "*Dima [Dmitry] took part in all the processes of creating BOAK — its theoretical work, practical training, organization of training and combat actions. But his main merit — and we don't think this will surprise anyone who knew him — was his ability to establish links with other people, with comrades at home and abroad... He was always open to new people. He always believed in the best in them — he was wrong more than once, but he kept believing and looking.*"

In a letter published after his death, Dmitry wrote:

"The BOAK is our brainchild, born of our faith in an organized struggle. We managed to carry it on different sides of state borders. I tried my best to contribute

to the victory over dictatorship and to bring the social revolution closer. And I am proud of my comrades who fought and fight in Russia and beyond. As an anarchist, revolutionary and Russian, I found it necessary to take part in the armed resistance of the Ukrainian people against Putin's occupiers."

Here he explains his involvement in the war in Ukraine:

"It was not just my individual decision and step. It was a continuation of our collective strategy aimed at creating sustainable structures and guerrilla combat confrontation with the tyrannical regimes of our region."

A long-time revolutionary activist, Dmitry played a key role in the development of the anarchist movement in Russia. He took part in the attack on a police station near Moscow, an important event that marked the beginning of a new generation of anarchist rebellion actions. Known as an environmental activist involved in the defence of the Khimki forest, Dmitry was a fighter in every sense of the word, and for many years combined a public commitment with a clandestine one. A passionate historian, he had a fine analysis of Russian society and a great love for his people. He studied the revolutionary process in Rojava in depth and travelled there as the war against ISIS raged in 2017. He served as a link between the Russian anarchist movement and the social revolution in Rojava, notably through the "Hevale: revolution in Kurdistan project".

Intense repression of the anarchist movement in Russia forced him into exile in 2018, and he decided to settle in Ukraine, where he began organizing directly. When the revolt broke out in Belarus, he crossed the border illegally to join the protests. According to Belarusian anarchists: "*While in Minsk, he took part in dozens of demonstrations, helped organize an anarchist block at the protests and even managed to injure police officers with their*