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War on Anarchism

A response to two articles by Wayne Price in the
anarchist journal Black Flag.

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- Let's maintain and build international links across the lines of conflict, between Russia, Ukraine and NATO countries, involving the recent Russian and Ukrainian emigres.
- Let's rediscover the traditions of antimilitarism and foster a new culture of antimilitarism everywhere we go

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quence and necessary, inescapable destiny of a regime founded upon the economic inequality of its citizens, relying upon the unbridled clash of interests, and placing the world of labor under the narrow, painful oversight of a minority of parasites who hold both political power and economic might.⁴⁷

It would be simple to outline the shape of an antimilitarist effort within NATO countries. The work of putting it into practice is a larger task, but it is one that awaits us:

- Let's challenge the imperialism and militarism of our states and increase the opportunities for others to do so. No to nationalism. No to a return to national or military service, no to conscription. No support for the US in its belligerent policies via Israel (towards the Middle East), Ukraine (towards Russia) and Taiwan (towards China). Undermine the support for the wars of the ruling class.
- Let's undermine the existence of NATO (and the militarisation of the EU) by speaking the truth of its wars. No to NATO bases, no to US missiles in our neighbourhoods, no to nukes. No to arms factories in our towns, no to arms sales – let's challenge the military-industrial complex, its profits and its influence on the state.
- Let's support all the organised and disorganised Ukrainian groups against Banderite nationalism and ethnic unmixing, against predatory capitalists (Western or homegrown), against conscription.
- Let's support resistance to Russian nationalism and oppose various neo-Stalinists who see in Russia an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist force. Moscow and Washington are two cheeks of the same backside.

⁴⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/malatesta/1915/manifesto.htm>

duced manoeuvrable space for anarchists in Ukraine and the NATO countries.⁴⁶

Instead, we should dust off the Anti-War Manifesto from 1915, signed by Emma Goldman, Errico Malatesta and Alexander Berkman, among others. It contains basic truths for opposing militarism, the ruling class and inter-imperialist conflict. And a warning for the war to come, as the US Empire takes China into its sights:

(T)here never has been and is no doubt—and today’s horrific events reinforce this confidence—that war is permanently incubating within the existing body of society and that armed conflict, be it specific or general, in the colonies or in Europe, is the natural conse-

⁴⁶ There is an often repeated argument used by Natopolitan Anarchists in the effort to bolster their warmongering theses. It runs like this: taking the position of a principled antimilitarism is a case of ‘westplaining’, while standing behind the world’s most bloodthirsty imperialist alliance is the correct and ‘undogmatic’ position which is, moreover, eagerly supported by the anarchist movements in Eastern Europe (those most exposed to the dangers of Russian imperialism). However, any more detailed analysis of the positions of the anarchist organisations in the East and West, shows this up as a myth. Namely, almost all the long-standing anarchist organisations in the the East (with the exception of the Czech Anarchist Federation and the émigré organisations from Belarus and Russia, based in Western Europe), have taken solid antimilitarist positions. Notable is the Balkan anarchist movement (with its core in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia), which has rejected all attempts to put the libertarian movement in the service of either NATO or Russian imperialism. An examination of the positions of collectives in the East of Europe, (whose ‘lived experience’ is waved as proof that the anarchists from that part of the world support Ukraine in the war and do not see it as just a NATO puppet regime), reveals that they are **as a rule** groups formed after the start of the war in Ukraine in 2014, and that in most cases they are left-liberal subcultural groups. On the other hand, in the West of Europe, a large number of even longer-standing anarchist organisations, collectives or publications hold, at the very least, dubious and unclear positions regarding the war, and in the worst cases (like the British outlet FREEDOM), take open warmongering positions and give space to such ideas. The exceptions are organisations (such as the Italian FAI-IFA or the Spanish CNT-IWA) and movements in countries with traditionally the strongest libertarian movements, such as Spain and Italy. (I am grateful to comrade E.M. for pointing this out.)

War is the health of the State. It automatically sets in motion throughout society those irresistible forces for uniformity, for passionate cooperation with the Government in coercing into obedience the minority groups and individuals which lack the larger herd sense. The machinery of government sets and enforces the drastic penalties. The minorities are either intimidated into silence, or brought slowly around by subtle process of persuasion which may seem to them really to be converting them. Of course, the ideal of perfect loyalty, perfect uniformity is never really attained. [...] (I)n general, the nation in wartime attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal, which could not possibly be produced through any other agency than war.

Randolph S. Bourne, *The State* (1918)¹

The split in the anarchist movement between antimilitarists and Natopolitan Anarchists² has grown deeper since February 2022. The Natopolitans continue to support the arming of the Ukrainian state, the escalation of hostilities, both in weapons and in scale, despite the numbers of dead Ukrainians, regardless of the threat of nuclear conflict, regardless of the reality of this war and its unending suffering meted out on the working class of Ukraine. In doing

¹ https://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~peace_health/courses/PtH-Course/Bourne-1918.htm

² “The now-obscure term ‘Natopolitan’ appears to have been coined by the British Marxist historian EP Thompson in the late 1970s. It referred not just to NATO proper, but also (in a later gloss by Edward Said) to ‘a mentality whose web extended over a lot more activity and thought’.” Gabriel Carlyle, review of the book ‘Natopolitanism’, *Peace News*, Dev 2023 <https://peacenews.info/node/10810/grey-anderson-ed-natopolitanism-atlantic-alliance-cold-war>

so, they are waging war on anarchism, here, over there and everywhere.³

If only the Natopolitan Anarchists were as honest as Pyotr Kropotkin during WWI. His position was that, of all the imperialisms, the German one was the most abominable, and that is why he sided with the imperial alliance to bring about its defeat. The Natopolitan position is an ‘anarchism’ even more degenerate than Kropotkin’s because often they don’t accept the existence, and never the crucial role, of US Imperialism (and its EU client states) in provoking this war. If they wanted to be truthful to Kropotkin’s position of lesser-evil-cheerleading, they would support the Russian state, since it is working to bring about the downfall of the most over-reaching and lethal empire in existence.⁴ That would mean they at least held some healthy antagonism towards their own ruling class.

Instead, one can’t escape the impression that Natopolitan Anarchists are nothing more than good liberals,⁵ believing that when Russia broke international law in its invasion of Ukraine, given no redress was available, they had to rush to the Global Policeman (the

³ This never really happened in NATO countries during NATO’s assault on Serbia, Libya or Afghanistan. It is a mark of the present degeneracy of the Western anarchist movement.

⁴ Professor Galtung claims that the US-Empire has killed or supported the killing of between 13 to 20 million people in 37 countries since the end of World War II (<https://dailypost.ng/2017/02/06/exclusive-us-killed-13-million-people-since-end-world-war-ii-prof-galtung/>) The Brown University ‘Costs of War’ project estimates: ‘3.6-3.8 million indirect deaths in post-9/11 war zones, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The total death toll in these war zones could be at least 4.5-4.7 million and counting, though the precise mortality figure remains unknown.’ (<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2023/IndirectDeaths>)

⁵ Being a good liberal nowadays means that you are a flag-waver for Woke Imperialism (crusading Liberal Hegemony), which imposes its will through gender-neutral bombs. Many have written and spoken about this, here is just one example: <https://peacediplomacy.org/2022/06/27/woke-imperium-the-coming-confluence-between-social-justice-and-neoconservatism/>

*pretty place. You don’t have the choice of electing Martin Luther King as the head of every government.*⁴³

The situation now is much worse, the death toll is higher and the risk of Ukraine ceasing to exist and a wider conflict is growing daily.⁴⁴ However, the basic facts remain the same. You don’t have to agree with the fully realisable pragmatism of Chomsky to see that he correctly starts from confronting the role of his (imperial) state. This is something that Natopolitan Anarchists cringe from. For example, Wayne Price takes up the slogan addressed to the US government during the Vietnam war years “Out Now!”, and in a fit of inspiration declaims:

Of course there will be talks, but the central issue remains: the Russian military must leave Ukraine, all of Ukraine, every square inch. “Out Now!”⁴⁵

I can assure him that the Russians aren’t listening. By taking up the line of the US state, Price is acting as its shill in the anarchist movement. The irony is lost on him: where once he used to confront the actions of his government, he is now cheering it on. He is joined by ‘leftist’ luminaries such as Slavoj Žižek and Paul Mason, eager handmaidens one and all. Lining up behind the ruling class and its proxy war has had a chilling effect on the movement, with Natopolitan Anarchists cancelling, hounding and suppressing the voices of antimilitarists. Continuing to bang the war drum, repeating the mantra that Ukraine can and must win, acts as a lifeline for the dwindling Western imperial core and reduces the already re-

⁴³ <https://chomsky.info/20220408/>

⁴⁴ The Natopolitans love to talk about how isolated Russia is and how its defeat could be brought about without risk of a wider war. I’ll remind them that after the invasion in 2022, India and China sent troops for joint military exercises on Russian territory – pretty clear statement of intent. All three are nuclear powers with more than a third of the world’s population. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/1/russias-war-games-with-china-all-you-need-to-know>

⁴⁵ ‘Lessons for Anarchists About the Ukraine War from Past Revolutions’, Wayne Price, Black Flag, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2023

the loss of Crimea and the Donbass (with an ongoing strategy to expand the conflict into Russia and draw NATO directly into the theatre of war) and the declining and increasingly desperate US global hegemony amid what is called the shift to multipolarity.

What role for anarchists?

Asked in April 2022, on recommendations to the Left and progressives in the US regarding the war in Ukraine, Noam Chomsky said:

First of all, as leftists, we should be opposed to all imperialism, should be opposed to overthrowing governments, to aggression and violence. And as human beings who are sensible and moral, we should concentrate our attention, energy, and activism on what we can do. Happens overwhelmingly to be the actions of our own government, which happens to be the leader in the world. World champion by far in opposing sovereignty, in aggression, in violence, and interference, in terrorism and so on. We should oppose Russian imitation of our actions. What can we do about it? Well, I think it's very clear. There are two options.[...] One option is one we're adopting. Fight to the last Ukrainian [...] and ensure that [...] Putin and his circle are backed up against the wall, no exit, no way out, therefore they'll have the basic option of destroying Ukraine and moving towards global war.[...]

There is another option. Abandon the policies, our official policies [...] Move towards accepting a status for Ukraine which is similar to Mexico, Austria, Finland for decades [...] withdraw the threats to Russia [...] move towards some kind of Minsk II style arrangement for a high level of autonomy for the Eastern region, maybe within a federal settlement. Recognize the reality that, like it or not, Crimea is off the table, it's not a negotiating option now. That's ugly, but the alternative is to continue our efforts to destroy Ukraine and to move towards an international war. Those are the choices. World is not a

USA), just this once, in this most moral of wars, just until the Russian Hitler was beaten back. To mask the contradiction between their supine liberal self and their anarchist self, they have spewed a number of myths since February 2022. Wayne Price is a typical example of this breed of Natopolitan Anarchist, which is why it is useful to examine some of his statements published on the pages of Black Flag.

The People

Price ventriloquizes Malatesta (in his writings on Libyan and Cuban struggles for independence) to garner support for “the Ukrainian People” under attack from the Russian state:

What light do Malatesta's views cast on the Ukrainian war? Certainly he would oppose an inter-imperialist war between Russia and the U.S.A. and its NATO allies—if it ever got to that—just as he denounced World War I. The war between the Russian state and the people of Ukraine is another matter. Russia is an imperialist aggressor. Ukraine is a weak, poor, and non-imperialist country.⁶

This phrase does not survive contact with reality. In reality, “the Ukrainian People” is a weapon of class war, a nationalist project of the Ukrainian state, which has been drawn in stark ethno-nationalist terms since 2014. The Maidan coup ushered in a project of ethnic unmixing - to be part of the Ukrainian People, one could not hold multiple identities and legacies, be they Soviet, Russian etc. To be part of the Ukrainian People also meant increasingly that one had to be anti-Russian, and the last people to fight the Russians, were the Banderite heroes of WWII, so the myth goes. Ukrainians (and their supporters) should therefore ignore that the Banderites were also fascists who participated

⁶ 'Malatesta on War and National Self-Determination: Lessons for Anarchists Considering the Ukrainian War' by Wayne Price, Black Flag, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 2022

eagerly in the race-supremacist genocides of the Nazis. As the war in the Donbass started and escalated, the Banderite legacy (in its soft and hard versions) was therefore equated with the project of Ukrainian self-determination.⁷

This state project of an ethnically pure Ukraine is being enforced internally and projected abroad, one reliant on ethnic un-mixing and ethnic cleansing. This is why the fully credentialed SS officer, Yaroslav Hunka (living out his days peacefully, aged 98) received a standing ovation in the Canadian Parliament, in the presence of Zelensky on 22nd September 2023.⁸ This is why the Azov Battalion (an organisation proscribed as “neo-Nazi” by the US Congress and various EU states) were welcomed as “heroes” to the British Parliament in May 2024, where Boris Johnson posed for a picture with their Nazi flag.⁹ The point I am making here is not that all Ukrainians are Nazis, but that these Nazis currently shaping the Ukrainian national project are **our Nazis**.

There is perfect continuity with the post-WWII years during which the CIA and NATO worked to Nazify Ukraine. Firstly, by shielding Bandera in Western Germany (until the KGB assassinated him) and stoking anti-Soviet armed resistance, then through another fascist, Mykola Lebed, held in the USA. The

⁷ Anyone doubting the hold of Banderism on the Ukrainian state should note well that during the war years as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valerii Zaluzhnyi held not one, but two portraits of Stepan Bandera on the wall of his office. And for those who think that here is merely ‘a rotten apple’, ask yourself, how long would a British general last if he hung two portraits of Oswald Mosley in his office? Less than a week. Because fascism is a defeated ideology. It is one of the greatest Ukrainian tragedies that Banderism has taken hold of the Ukrainian state to such an extent, but it’s by no means unique, as the resurgence of Nazi/fascist rehabilitation in the Baltic states shows. Like in Ukraine, the main motor of this process is an unhinged hatred of Russia (rather than a rational desire to reorient away from Russia).

⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/yaroslav-hunka-canada-nazi-germany-faq-1.6981437>

⁹ <https://mossroberson.medium.com/azov-brigade-invades-london-greeted-as-liberators-5facc63517b0>

claiming that ‘the Vietnam-U.S. War was a mirror image of the Ukraine-Russia War’, Wayne Price loudly protests against this also being also a proxy war. Instead, he draws a textbook set of conditions of what an inter-imperialist conflict would look like:

*This analysis would change under different circumstances. This would become mainly a war between imperialist sides if, for example, the U.S. were to send its army into Ukraine to fight the Russians, or if missiles were exchanged, back and forth, between Russia and the NATO countries. Then both sides should be opposed because the main issue would be the warfare between imperialist powers. But this has not happened.*⁴¹

The reason a direct exchange is something both camps want to avoid and it hasn’t happened during or after the Cold War, is the existence of respective sizeable nuclear arsenals. This is why proxy wars (Korea, Vietnam, Congo, Nicaragua, Afghanistan etc.) between the US and USSR were historically the weapon of choice to weaken the other side.⁴² To not understand this is to misunderstand the whole nature of the world order. It is certainly key to understanding the nature of the war in Ukraine, its course and potential end.

The danger of nuclear escalation is the reason why NATO is doing everything to escalate while covering its tracks (by ‘sheep dipping’ its troops, maintaining deniability in targeting and surveillance, keeping the responsibility with the Ukrainians) and Russia is doing everything to destroy the Ukrainian army, rather than capture territory. It is a dangerous gamble, made more unpredictable by the high stakes for all three states: Russia’s possible defeat (which it sees as an existential threat, making its recourse to nuclear weapons more likely), the enflamed ethno-nationalism which is core to the Ukrainian national project and has led to

⁴¹ ‘Lessons for Anarchists About the Ukraine War from Past Revolutions’, Wayne Price, Black Flag, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2023

⁴² <http://www.defenddemocracy.press/how-the-pentagon-uses-a-secretive-program-to-wage-proxy-wars/>

Ukrainian State (just until it beats the Russians), the Ukrainian state wages class war.

Keeping it proxy

And while there is no doubt that amidst the hell of civil war, invasion and class war, Ukrainians are fighting for their survival, it is also clear that the USA's furtherance of its hegemony rests on support for its client states. That is why, in April 2024, after months of delays and politicking, the US congress approved \$95 billion of funding for its client states: Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.³⁸ Much of this funding is loans, or kickbacks for the US arms industry at home. But a substantial part of it is meant for its Ukraine proxy effort to weaken and, if possible dismember, Russia.³⁹ As has repeatedly been stated in the US Senate:

*The United States aids Ukraine and her people so that they can fight Russia over there, and we don't have to fight Russia here.*⁴⁰

This (together with the overview of NATO's capture of the Ukrainian state I provided above) would be as concise an expression of policy, financial support and strategy towards supporting Ukraine as a proxy force. But this is insufficient for Natopolitan Anarchists who parrot the US state line of supporting a weak country fighting unhinged Russian Imperial aggression, which unchecked will march on through Poland and the Baltics. The argument is always shifted away from US interests and manoeuvring of the Ukrainian state, towards the strictly temporally (an invasion which started in Feb 2022) and spatially (Ukraine is a small, sovereign country) limited picture. This is why, despite

³⁸ <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2024/04/24/congress-sends-ukraine-israel-taiwan-aid-package-to-presidents-desk/>

³⁹ As the latest NATO messenger, Estonian PM Kaja Kallas said in passing: <https://twitter.com/eeldenden/status/1792880764498935872/video/1>

⁴⁰ <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/22/adam-schiff-opening-argument-trump-impeachment-trial-102202>

CIA project was called AERODYNAMIC and was redesignated to QRPLUMB/QRDYNAMIC¹⁰ in 1970. It ran until 1991, when Ukraine was officially approached by NATO for integration into the military alliance.¹¹ For this project of building (unmixing) a pure Ukrainian People, one had to ignore that the anti-Russian President Poroshenko spoke Russian at home and that Zelensky had to learn Ukrainian to address the nation (this resulted in cringeworthy gaffes while he learned the language on the job). The current supreme commander of Ukraine, Syrsky is an ethnic Russian, born in Russia, whose parents and brother live in Russia. All three men have undergone ethnic unmixing in the service of the Ukrainian state. Since 2019, Russian, Belarusian and Yiddish have been banned from public life.¹² 19 million books in Russian have been withdrawn from libraries¹³ - the aim is to destroy 100 million of them.¹⁴

It should be clear that there is no pure-blooded fascistic Ukrainian People, it is a state project to destroy a rich set of heterogeneous traditions and peoples. When anarchists support the myth of one Ukrainian People, they are supporting this ethno-nationalist and fascistic project. They are weakening any local initiative which opposes it. In NATO countries, they are weakening antimilitarist initiatives, strengthening the hold of the state on speaking the truth about the war, and assisting the state in the criminalisation of dissent.

The other sense of the phrase "Ukrainian People" is that of a unified population, without class or regional differences. Even in

¹⁰ <https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/US-Tried-to-Impose-Nazi-Leader-on-Ukraine-in-WWII-CIA-Leak-20160523-0003.html>

¹¹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm

¹² [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2019\)032-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2019)032-e)

¹³ <https://www.newsweek.com/fact-check-has-ukraine-banned-19-million-russian-books-its-libraries-1779446>

¹⁴ <https://imi.org.ua/en/news/more-than-100-million-propaganda-books-to-be-withdrawn-from-libraries-book-institute-director-i45735>

2022, this myth was obvious, but with the war in its third year, the fractures in Ukrainian society cannot be ignored. An estimated 6.4 million Ukrainians have fled the country and an estimated 650,000 men of a fighting age are among them.¹⁵ The remaining men continue to dodge the draft in huge numbers. Hunted in the streets by state gangs, they cower indoors. Fleeing, they drown trying to swim across the Tisza River on their way to Romania.¹⁶ Draft-dodging through corruption was so widespread and such a well-known scandal, that the Ukrainian state was forced to sack all military recruitment chiefs in 2023.¹⁷ This exposes the class-struggle within the mythical unity of the Ukrainian People. Always it is the working class that gets sent to fight the war of the ruling class. Therefore, the ruling class abides in Kyiv and abroad, remaining untouchable, while the middle-class buys its way out of conscription. Listen to the words of the Ukrainian anarchist group 'Assembly' from Kharkov in August 2022:

*(W)e should understand that the national unity of Ukrainians around Zelensky's power rests only on fear of an external threat.*¹⁸

And this is what they said in an interview in February 2024:

*The Assembly is an online newsletter, and if we can help the deserters in any way, then only by giving them a political justification for their acts, so that they do not suffer from remorse, but are proud of their refusal to choose between serving either Vladolf Putler or François Zevalier, personifications of the darkest reaction that is only possible in today's Europe, refusal to choose between the occupying colonial expedition and the defense of what has been grabbed by the Ukrainian ruling class since 1991.*¹⁹

¹⁵ <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-a-struggle-for-the-ages/>

¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-67120904>

¹⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-top-general-criticizes-presidents-firing-recruitment-chiefs-media-2023-12-18/>

¹⁸ https://antimilitarismus.noblogs.org/files/2024/04/INTERVIEW-WITH-THE-UKRAINIAN-ANARCHIST-GROUP-ASSEMBLY_FINAL.pdf

¹⁹ https://antimilitarismus.noblogs.org/files/2024/04/INTERVIEW-WITH-THE-UKRAINIAN-ANARCHIST-GROUP-ASSEMBLY_FINAL.pdf Read the

der grenade fire, sniper fire etc. etc. etc. The soil is so scarred that it looks like the surface of the moon, the villages and towns are empty shells of concrete, the forests are burnt to a cinder. Natopolitan Anarchists never talk about the frontline. About videos of conscripted Ukrainians begging for their lives under FPV drones, or with their legs blown off crawling through the mud. At best they will post a link to that that glamorous and ghoulish photo shoot, organised by the Ukrainian state, where veteran amputees were dressed in evening dress and made to pose with a porn star.³⁵

Rather than a self-organised people's army, Zelensky's vision for Ukraine is that of a fully militarised, garrisoned state, like Israel. His plan for the country after the war is this:

*[W]e will definitely become a "big Israel" with its own face. We will not be surprised that we will have representatives of the Armed Forces or the National Guard in all institutions, supermarkets, cinemas, there will be people with weapons. I am sure that our security issue will be number one in the next ten years.*³⁶

Instead of supporting its population, the Ukrainian state is waging class war, undertaking neoliberal shock reforms, directed by the loan shark called the IMF. As an Open Democracy article recaps:

*(I)ntead of focusing on adapting the economy to the needs of war, the Ukrainian authorities have launched a vast privatisation programme. Taking advantage of martial law and the restrictions on demonstrations, the government has also dismantled labour legislation and pushed through a series of other unpopular measures.*³⁷

While Natopolitan Anarchists like Wayne Price entreat us to fall behind the Ukrainian People (which is a fiction) and the

³⁵ <https://nypost.com/2024/03/18/world-news/ukrainian-porn-star-josephine-jackson-poses-with-soldiers-who-lost-limbs/>

³⁶ <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/dlya-ukrayinskoyi-derzhavi-pitannya-bezpeki-maye-buti-na-per-74113>

³⁷ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-workers-fight-anti-labour-policies-russia/>

[Kharkov is a] prison where lights out at 9 pm, roughly speaking. If in 2020, according to then-mayor Kernes, the average age in Kharkov was 35 years old, then at the beginning of a full-scale war there were mostly pensioners, and now the average age of the population is about 50. Although this is only a visual impression of public places, because men of conscription age (in Ukraine it is from 18 to 60 years, and leaving of the country is prohibited for most of them) often do not risk leaving the house and try to move along the streets only by car. Depression, alcoholism and complete sadness. The ship has been at the bottom already for a long time, but the passengers have locked themselves in their cabins and think that there will be enough air until someone saves them...³¹

If the average age in the Kharkov street is 50, the average age at the frontline in February 2024 is 43.³² This is because the young men are dead, hiding or fled. And Zelensky is lying when he says the death toll is 31,000.³³ The size of this lie is monstrous. The real numbers are carefully guarded but the casualties are probably closer to 500,000, as the ex-head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Yuriy Lutsenko recently said.³⁴ Having followed the front line daily, I think the number of dead is close to half a million and that there are as many or more seriously wounded. The Ukrainians know that these conscripted men have died from suicide drones or drone grenades falling from the sky, in minefields, under 'flamethrower' thermobaric bombs, under white phosphorus, under cluster bombs, under FAB glide bombs with a yield of 500 to 1500 kgs of explosives, under artillery fire and in cruise missile strikes, in tank battles, under helicopter rockets, in rifle battles, un-

³¹ https://antimilitarismus.noblogs.org/files/2024/04/INTERVIEW-WITH-THE-UKRAINIAN-ANARCHIST-GROUP-ASSEMBLY_FINAL.pdf from February 2024

³² <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-a-struggle-for-the-ages/>

³³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-68397525>

³⁴ <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/it-will-be-a-shock-ukraine-lost-500000-soldiers-in-war/>

How hollow do the words of Wayne Price ring in contrast:

It is true that the Ukrainian people are not anarchists or socialists; they accept their state and capitalism. Does that mean that anarchists should punish them by refusing to defend them when attacked by a strong enemy which massacres their people and smashes their cities?²⁰

Assembly's position is anarchist, Price's reeks of the full patronising and proselytizing zeal of liberal imperialism, which hides behind an endorsement of the myth of national self-determination. To perpetuate this myth, Price also has to maintain the myth of a people's army.

The people's army

Two days after the Russian invasion, the BBC treated us to the spectacle of Ukrainian women workshopping how to make molotov cocktails.²¹ This astroturfed photo-op seems to have been designed for those as gullible as Wayne Price. At the time, the Ukrainian army was the greatest NATO proxy ever to be assembled, trained and equipped. Its success in the field did not depend on guerilla warfare, as has become blindingly obvious in the months that followed.

Shortly after, we saw the emergence of Natopolitan Anarchism, another manifestation of NAFO.²² In capturing a large section of the Western anarchist movements and scenes, this was a

whole interview for a sense of the paranoia and stress involved in draft-dodging during an invasion of your country by a vastly superior enemy army.

²⁰ 'Malatesta on War and National Self-Determination: Lessons for Anarchists Considering the Ukrainian War' by Wayne Price, Black Flag, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 2022

²¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-60540341>

²² North Atlantic Fella Organisation is a NATO-led mobilisation of citizens on social media, engaged in the propaganda war against Russia and supporting and disseminating NATO myths, disinformation and talking points [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NAFO_\(group\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NAFO_(group))

victory for the militarist project. A good example of this is the backslapping folkloric feelgood group ‘Good Night Imperial Pride’, which crowdfunds for snipers, drones etc. for so-called ‘anarchist fighters’ integrated into the Ukrainian Army. GNIP is popular online, promoted by anarchist groups and even held a stall at the 2023 London Anarchist Bookfair.²³ Only someone completely deranged by virtue signalling can believe that their crowd-funded donation to the “Ukrainian anarchist cause” will tip the scales, when all the state economies of NATO countries are sending money and materiel on a scale hitherto unseen.²⁴ Those unlucky anarchists blindsided by the NAFO psyop have ended up dead in the meat-grinders of Bakhmut and Avdeevka, circles of hell forced upon the Ukrainian working class by the Ukrainian state. For them, NAFO was the mainline to FAFO. They deserved better than elders like the Natopolitan Anarchists who misled them.

Wayne Price parrots the White House spokespeople when he writes:

*Russia is not fighting a proxy war but is engaging in direct aggression. Nor are the Ukrainians fighting a proxy war. It is they who are spilling their blood, fighting directly against the invaders of their country. Whatever the U.S. is paying in armaments, the Ukrainians are paying with their lives. Whatever the motives of the U.S. and its NATO allies, and even whatever is the motivation of the Ukrainian state, the people have their own interest in driving out the occupiers and mass murderers. That they take arms from the Western governments means little – they need arms and where else can they get them?*²⁴

As if this is a last minute scramble for some bullets, as if NATO hasn’t been involved in training and provisioning the Ukrainian

²³ <https://anarchistbookfair.london/stall/good-night-imperial-pride/>

²⁴ ‘Lessons for Anarchists About the Ukraine War from Past Revolutions’, Wayne Price, Black Flag, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2023

Army since 1991.²⁵ As if Ukraine wasn’t already an important contributor to NATO missions, specifically in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, as George Bush highlighted in 2008, when making a case for Ukraine joining NATO.²⁶ As if the CIA didn’t install 12 secret bases facing Russia, after the Maidan coup.²⁷ As if the pursuit of NATO membership wasn’t etched into the Ukrainian constitution in 2019, ripping up Ukrainian neutrality.²⁸ As if NATO generals aren’t directly involved in the selection of Russian targets.²⁹ As if all of this doesn’t make Ukraine a *de facto* member of NATO, if not *de jure*. An enduring myth of Natopolitan Anarchism is that anyone pointing to the fingerprints of US Imperialism is denying “Ukrainian agency”. As if the world’s hegemon, with nearly 800 military bases across the globe gives a damn about national sovereignty, even of its so-called allies (which is why it forcibly decoupled Germany from Russia by blowing up the Nord Stream pipelines).³⁰ To mask the truth of this conflict, stoked by the USA, Natopolitan Anarchists perpetuate the myth of Ukrainian agency and popular resistance.

The reality of war is forced conscription and conscription is slavery. It is buttressed by nationalism and patriotism (both parasitically feed on a genuine need for self-determination) which are weapons against the working class. Here are some words from the group Assembly again about the reality of draft-dodging in Ukraine:

²⁵ Once again, read the timeline on NATO’s own website: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm

²⁶ <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/04/01/bush.nato/index.html>

²⁷ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2024/02/25/7443679/>

²⁸ ‘WAR IN UKRAINE – Making Sense of A Senseless Conflict’, Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J.S. Davies, OR Books, 2022, p112

²⁹ <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-taurus-missiles-ukraine-war-russia-leaked-audio/>

³⁰ <https://seymourhersh.substack.com/p/how-america-took-out-the-nord-stream>