

Interview: The Committee of Resistance, Kyiv

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We conducted an audio interview with a spokesperson from “The Committee of Resistance,” the newly formed anarchist coordinating group in Ukraine. They will be fielding public inquiries about what anarchists are doing and experiencing in Ukraine. We transcribed the interview as we talked.

“The Committee of Resistance” is a coordination center connecting anarchists who are participating in resisting the invasion in a variety of ways. Some are currently on the front; some are engaged in media work about the conditions arising during this resistance, in hopes of clarifying the situation in Ukraine to those who have never been there and explaining to anarchists elsewhere why they believe that resisting Putin is connected with liberation. The project will also be engaging in some support projects in whatever remains of Ukrainian civil society as the invasion proceeds—for example, in Mariupol’, some participants brought material support to the center hosting children orphaned by the war—and will assist some comrades in escaping from the conflict zone, though “dozens and dozens” of anarchists and anti-fascists are participating in the resistance.

As of now, the participants are watching to see what mutual aid projects will emerge in Kyiv out of efforts on the part of the population as a whole, and which ones they can participate in most effectively as anarchists.

The person we spoke with is currently located in Kyiv; others have already departed to participate in territorial defense in the regions surrounding Kyiv. In Kyiv, many people are leaving the city, but there has not been aerial bombing since the morning, when the Russian air force attacked military targets around the city and also hit some civilian housing areas in outlying towns, including Brovary, killing dozens of people.

In Kyiv, the atmosphere is tense, but there is no fighting in the city yet, only the aircraft attacks of the morning. Thus far, anarchists have experienced no known casualties, but they are facing serious dangers. It is a hard situation, but so far, the participants’ spirits are high.

The majority of the participants in this project were expecting the invasion to begin soon, generally speaking, but they were not expecting it *today*, and were not entirely mentally prepared for it. In fact, they planned and prepared for months, but now they are discovering everything that remained unfinished in their preparations. Still, in the course of hasty meetings, they have pulled together this coordination project.

The spokesperson described their immediate goal: it is not to protect the Ukrainian state, but to protect Ukrainian people and the form of Ukrainian society, which is still pluralistic, even though the Ukrainian state itself is neoliberal and a nationstate with nationalism and all the other terrible things that come with that. “Our idea is that we have to defend the spirit of this society against being smashed by Putin’s regime, which threatens the entire existence of the society.”

Panning back from that immediate goal, the spokesperson said that they hope to confront Russian military aggression while promoting anarchist perspectives both within Ukrainian society and throughout the world—to show that anarchists are involved in this struggle, that they have taken sides in it—not with the state, but with the people who are impacted by the invasion, with the society of the people who live in Ukraine.

“It is not an exaggeration to say that the whole population is confronting the invasion. Of course, some people are fleeing, but any force that has any investment in the political development of this place in the future has to be on the side of the people here right now. We want to make some inroads towards being connected with people here on a larger scale, towards getting organized with them. Our long-term task, our dream, is to become a visible political force within this society in order to secure a real opportunity to promote a message of social liberation for people.”

In response to the statement that the “whole population is confronting the invasion,” we inquired as to whether that included the people in the “republics,” the Luhansk People’s Republic [LPR] and Donetsk People’s Republic [DPR]—the regions in eastern Ukraine that have been occupied by Russian-armed and funded separatist forces since 2014, which Putin just recognized as “independent.”

“Honestly,” the spokesperson answered, “I have little perspective about the people in the so-called republics; I have only lived here for several years”—having grown up in a neighboring country—“and have never been to the southeast. It’s true that there have been some conflicts about language, and local far-right people have exacerbated these conflicts needlessly and severely. For this reason, in the ‘republics,’ we saw some people waving Russian state flags to welcome the troops, even though this ‘independence’ will mean the opposite, it will mean being totally subservient to Putin. At the same time, nearby across the trenches, on the other side of the battle lines, we saw thousands of people waving Ukraine’s national flags. We don’t like this, either, as anarchists, but it does mean that people are ready to fight—that they are ready to defend their independence not only as a state but as a society.”

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