And this is a contradiction in itself, because on the other hand, the majority of society supports refugees and supports Ukraine in this war. But there are still those people who believe that Ukrainians are our enemies as a nation.

L: What has been the reaction of the anarchist movement and the associated anti-fascist, feminist movement? In Poland, as I understand it, many of these themes are intertwined, and the movement is not necessarily framed as an anarchist movement. What actions have people taken, is this support continuing or is it gradually fading away and some new local themes are emerging? And in general, what is the mainstream position on the war? What voices are being heard about the war specifically with an anarchist analysis?

A: I think the anarchist movement at the very beginning also rushed to help in any way they could, as did most of society. They rushed to help their comrades. And there was a lot going on in the beginning: people were organizing transport, all kinds of help and helping refugees who were stuck at the borders to get out too. This was done by the group No Borders, for example. Why was this help needed? Because, for example, there were also people who had a residence permit in Ukraine, but they were not white enough and as a result there were all sorts of problems. At that time, it was very difficult for everyone at the border, both whites and non-whites. So there was a lot of movement.

I think for a while everything else was on pause. After months people started to return to the rest of their activities and it's important that some collectives, some people from the anarchist movement continue to help. Now there are good links with the Solidarity Collectives in Ukraine and I think there are links that were not there before between anarchists in Poland and anarchists in Ukraine, or if there were, they were not at that level. People continue to travel, to bring aid to comrades who are on the front line, for example.

Dogma

Anarchists on the War in Ukraine

Lera Khotina

5 April 2024

too many people and so on and about the negative attitude towards migrants.

And we should not forget that yes, human impulse is one thing, but there were still all sorts of terrible situations. For example, there were people going to the border, offering to give a ride to someone, and taking women away, who then disappeared. And it's clear that it's all tied to human trafficking… It's just important not to forget that not everything is so simple: that there is a kind of Poland, and good Poles, some part of the population… yes, they had some impulse that lasted for a certain period of time. But there were also people who tried to profit from the situation and exploit it.

In fact, there was very little support from the state, and it all rested on volunteers, on grassroots initiatives, and now the state is proud of it. And it is very unpleasant. And I think it is noticed by ordinary people too, that there is not enough help.

L: Well, what xenophobic sentiments remain? I mean, there are probably some right-wingers who still remember the massacre of Poles by Ukrainians from history and so on. How relevant is this now at all, or are these marginal groups?

A: Yes, it's very relevant. Maybe they had more support in the past, but even now there is a part of society that supports this opinion: that too many people come and talk about the Ukrainianization of Poland. This is what right-wing organizations are doing, and if I'm not mistaken, these organizations marched on November 11 as well.

L: And what is November 11?

A: November 11 is a Polish national holiday, Independence Day. On this day, for many years now, a big nationalist march has been organized in Warsaw, and nationalists and various nationalist organizations march on it. Not all of them are friends with each other, but on this holiday they march together and they are also joined by ordinary people who may not quite understand what these organizations are. Just going to celebrate independence day. And during this march there were organizations with banners against Ukraine.

least in the beginning I read statistics that somewhere around 80% of Polish society thought that the threat is big and that there's a high probability that something will happen here.

Now there are fewer people, but it is kind of stable, it seems that 70% of the society thinks that Russia is a threat. It is clear that the fear and hope that Ukraine will win and it will not directly affect Poland, i.e. there will be no invasion of Poland.

L: So it's as if Poland and Polish citizens have a personal interest in making sure that the war stays where it is now, that it doesn't come close to the Polish borders, and that some other people there, preferably not Poles, face the consequences: guarding the borders against the invasion of the Russians. Can you talk about some kind of change in empathy when you talk about solidarity? Can you say that it's some kind of really just human impulse? Or is it precisely the urge of such fear that tomorrow it could be us, and we show such solidarity not from the position that we are the ones who just have something, and we provide shelter, money, housing, and so on. Rather, that it could be us tomorrow, and so we reassure ourselves a little bit? As I understand it, maybe correct me, but in the recent wars, I haven't seen any mobilization from the Poles. To send something to Syria, or to take in Syrian refugees and so on.

A: Yes, on the contrary. I think at the very beginning there was some human factor, some impulse in my heart that I should help. On the other hand, the strategy of the state was to provide military support so that Russia would not take over the territory of Poland. Why do I think that in the beginning there was a big impulse of heart and humanity? Because it didn't last long, and then it became apparent that it was already very difficult to rent a place to live. For example, in the beginning it was very easy to find something even for free. Now it's super hard, and all sorts of outlets have closed down. And it's like this is not the biggest news anymore. People got used to the situation and the old attitude towards people with Ukraine also came back a little bit: as it was before, that there are

Contents

Will NATO defend Poland? A conversation with a Polish anarchist

L: Hi, Anya. Have you noticed any new trends in general in society? Can they be negative or positive? How has the war in Ukraine affected Polish society? What kind of context and discourse is present in Polish society in general?

Anya: It seems to me that over the last year the attitude towards people from Ukraine has changed dramatically in Polish society. Before the war, that is, before the invasion, people from Ukraine were perceived as cheap labor, that there were too many of them, that they were taking away jobs from Poles, and so on. Such a rather stereotypical attitude towards migrants. When Russia's invasion of Ukraine started, a lot of people in Poland rushed to help in any way they could: humanitarian aid, collecting money, helping migrants/refugees and so on. Provided housing, sent humanitarian aid, and raised money for it.

And then the attitude towards people from Ukraine also changed, because it probably became clearer what was happening in Ukraine as a whole. And that the people who come are now refugees who are fleeing the war, and that's not how it was perceived before. But it was temporary, I mean it was a few months of very active assistance. And now it's becoming more stable: that is, people are not so happy that people from Ukraine are coming and not so happy to help as before… But in general the attitude has changed, because in Poland they see a threat from Russia, at

L: And lastly, this question: what comes to mind when you hear that after a year everyone has stopped feeling anything about the war? What is the most urgent thing for anarchists to do now to end the war, to bring it closer to an end?

A: I would suggest supporting any collectives/communities operating in Ukraine, especially small communities with more responsibility, which are in direct contact with people, for example, in the de-occupied territories working and which lack resources. And I don't mean just donations, but providing any specific skills that can be useful to volunteer groups, to groups of people at war. All means of solidarity are good, but it is also important to listen to criticism, not to "do good" and not to do what is not expected of you.

G: In our opinion, we need to create more alternative institutions and structures in society, to establish relations, contacts with people in all spheres of society. To create a practical replacement for the state, which must fall! Because the big war that is going on, the war against the state, will not end soon.

A: For me, I see the moment when it will be possible to release all the inhabitants of the occupied territories, all prisoners of war and political prisoners, as we are talking about thousands of people who may remain behind bars even with a change in power. And I am responsible for preventing this issue from becoming completely invisible. Write letters to them – you can do it from inside Russia.

L: Thank you guys so much for joining us today! It is truly a joy to have you as comrades. I wish you success in your types of wrestling and your lines of work. Anyway, good luck to all of us and thanks for joining us! See you soon!

A year and a half after the original dogma podcast series, we have converted the audio to text format. This is a collection of interviews with anarchist activists from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Poland, Germany, France, Greece and Finland. Inside you will find different views of anarchists on the war in Ukraine and how anarchist movements in different parts of Europe reacted to it. Original conversations happened in January-February 2023, but since then many points remained the same.

We would like to thank everyone who helped us in the work on this material – members of our team and our subscribers in Telegram, who did a significant part of the work. Special thanks to: Nasetsenka, 123, mistaer, Emma, Anonymous, Lera

Translation: Bad Immigrant
Editing: KA

War and Ukrainian anarchists

Dogma: My name is Lera Khotina, and today I am talking to two anarchists from Ukraine who are members of the Solidarity Collectives, an organization that provides various kinds of support to those comrades who have decided to join the armed struggle in the ranks of the Ukrainian army. I remind you that the opinions expressed by my comrades are theirs alone and do not claim to be the official position of the collectives they belong to.

Lera: Ksu, please tell us what SolCol ("SolidarityCollectives" – editor's note) is doing now, maybe some background, and what tasks do you do within this collective?

Ksu: You could say that the predecessor of SolCol was the organization Operation Solidarity. This organization was created on February 23, when this terrible address of Putin about "decommunization, demilitarization, denazification of Ukraine" was announced. Before that date, some groups in Ukraine believed that war was inevitable, others believed that it was not, some people held the position "let's deal with some other issues".

In the end, February 23rd was such a climax, when all the anarchists from the various groups decided to get together and discuss what would happen in the event of an invasion. And it was only in the evening that they got together, and decided that we would have several directions: one group that would go off to fight, the second group would support them; it was only when they, so to speak, approved this at the meeting that they went home – a couple of hours later bombs started exploiding in Kiev, Kharkiv, and the war began.

but a need to renew it. Because the position against state aggression must also include the notion of self-defense. About what people should do when they find themselves in such situations. In this respect, there are certain ideological gaps, a certain gap in reality between how it is perceived by different people. For example, this is not always the case with Western comrades, but very often. I think people in such situations try to proceed from their own experiences. The comrades in Greece always have an anti-NATO theme, and now many of them are in cognitive dissonance, like "what to do in such a situation?" I think the situation of understanding is better in some countries that experienced Russian or Soviet aggression. Let's say the Czech Republic, where last year the Czech Anarchist Federation wrote a pretty good article called "People First." I think it's appropriate to say that in Ukraine the comrades are in a terrible situation, and they are doing what they have to do. Even though in some moments these actions may contradict anarchist ideas, this is not their fault, and the responsibility for solving these kinds of problems should lie not with them, but with the entire anarchist movement. And, turning to the Western comrades, if it seems that there are some contradictions and Ukrainian anarchists are not ideal, we should not deprive people of support, but rather see it as a collective task. And if Western comrades don't fully understand what's going on in Ukraine, that's also a question for all of us. One parallel that comes to my mind is how one comrade was sexually abused and there was a big meeting to discuss this problem and how to defend against it, how to deal with this situation. And when one comrade found out that she [the comrade] had gone to the police, he said, "I will not support this, because it involves the state. This is not anarchism." I think we have a similar situation now. If we don't create sufficient ideological and practical structures to deal with such moments, it is not surprising that we will turn to the available tools and options at hand. It's understandable that people try to do the best they can. I think there has to be some such logic.

it requires organized structures, comrades, who are able to conduct complex communication, to take criticism constructively, even if it doesn't seem constructive to them at the moment, and to aim for a strong movement and mutual support and be guided by it to overcome difficulties. To make criticism something good, something welcome, something that is interesting to think about, something that is important to discuss.

L: We talked a little bit on other episodes, and we talked about the fact that, especially when dealing with Western comrades, there is a problem with supporting armed struggle on the side of the state. For example, the participation of Ukrainian anarchists in the AFU is not very consistent with anarchist theory. The Russian anarchist movement, on the other hand, is aimed at slowing down the war, slowing down troop movements, slowing down mobilization – it's as if it fits very well into typical anti-war anarchist theory. You've got deserters and sabotage on the railroads. I wanted to ask you, how much solidarity do you see from comrades from the West? Is it sufficient? Is there an ongoing sustained interest in this topic? What is your experience of interaction with and support from the Western anarchist movement?

A: This is quite a sore point as the lack of support for comrades is a fairly common position. The focus of attention is really on local resistance. I often find myself having to shift the focus and say that internal resistance is only part of the fight against the common enemy, which is obviously the Russian state.

When we crossed the border, we were greeted by banners: a man with a grenade launcher and a sign saying "every 5€ you spend is an occupier killed". But yes, the "lay down your arms and don't support any war or any state" stance is stronger the further west you go. The pacifist stance seems like it can only lead to greater evil under the current circumstances, and it's clear that it's a dead-end logic that I don't see evolving.

R: Yes, we are also witnessing this situation. There is a certain failure of the old anarchist anti-militarist logic, not even a failure,

All this was organized chaotically and in a very short period of time, but nevertheless, several organizations were born, and one of them was "Operation Solidarity": a group of anti-authoritarians, whose main task was to support comrades at the front (anarchists, feminists, anti-authoritarians, punks, eco-activists – in fact, the group of people was quite broad).

It so happened that although this organization had done quite a lot, in May there were conflicts between the members of the collective. As always, there was money involved, the question of power, the question of masculinity… And as a result, "Operation Solidarity" fell apart into several organizations: "Solidarity Collectives", "Help War Victims" (an initiative more concerned with humanitarian aid to war victims) and "Goodnight Imperial Pride". That's what I remember, there may have been others, so please don't be offended if I've forgotten anyone.

The Solidarity Collectives initiative can be called the heir to the idea of the Operation Solidarity group. It is an initiative that has three departments. One of them is military: its task is to cover the needs of the fighters. To find the necessary equipment, money and give it to the fighters. That is, a request comes from the soldiers, we process it and look for the necessary things in Europe or Ukraine, buy them and give them to the fighters, that's how it works. There is also a humanitarian direction, which deals with helping people affected by the war in the de-occupied territories: we bring food, things, everything we can. And there is a media department, which is our weakest so far, I would say. The media department was tasked with presenting what is happening in Ukraine and what achievements we have on the anti-authoritarian front. But since we have a rather limited number of people, different tasks are divided among everyone. That is, you can work in the military department, provide a little help in the media department, then do logistics, then networking, and all this on one person. That's why sometimes it's not possible to organize the whole work perfectly. Nevertheless, it works, and we have already managed to do quite a lot of good

things. We help regularly 70–80 fighters at the front, we cover their requests, we organize humanitarian trips to the affected areas and to the de-occupied territories. We try to keep all the accounts publicly, how and to whom we help. I hope that in the future we will expand our activities. For example, in the humanitarian sphere, in addition to helping the affected areas, to organize evacuations.

L: You said that there are not enough people, and you also said that you usually have several people working in different areas. Is this due to the fact that not all of your local comrades want to join, or that not all of them can handle the heavy workload that your collective provides? Or is it due to the fact that, let's say, the majority of active comrades went to the front, and there are only a few people left in the rear?

K: Indeed, quite a lot of active people went to the front, who previously took part in political life and participated in activist initiatives. Some people stayed back, and it's not to say that the most active or the most inactive part remained, just that there was a mix of people with different characteristics and ideas about what an anarchist collective should look like and what goals it should pursue. In general, a regular anarchist movement often cannot unite,because people have different worldviews and opinions. Nevertheless, the war, especially in the first months, became a very good motivation for many different people to unite. Before the war, some people could not tolerate each other, some could not find common ground. The war erased all that. Especially in the first months there was no such division and no conflicts. But as time went on, some habits, some ideological differences began to surface, some began to flirt with the authority, some began to actively resist it. Maybe some were more emotional, some were not looking for compromises – and conflicts began. Some people left (well, in fact, this is why Operation Solidarity fell apart), and for some time people dropped out. Besides, the pace of this war is very intense, it is quite emotional – to track the dynamics of your comrades at the front, soldiers, to search for things regularly, to work in parallel, to read all the news

the movement that remains there, it is quite unproductive to ask them to donate. Those who can and understand how to do it already know and do it, while for the other part of the audience it is, first of all, difficult and, secondly, involves very high risks. It is strange to call for it from a position of greater security (e.g. emigration) for comrades who remain in more dangerous conditions. It is indeed a pity that there are no such calls in the public sphere, but one can understand where these fears and self-censorship in calls for solidarity come from.

L: Zhenya, do you have anything to add?

R: I don't know, maybe it has something to do with what Anya just said, but on the other hand, maybe we really are too focused on our struggle against the regime and supporting those who are under repression. Or maybe the problem is also that there is no understanding, as I have already described, that we have to act as more or less one organism, and it becomes more difficult to organize various spheres of activity and fill them up properly. And in general, it can be traced back to the fact that for the last 8–9 years the links with the context in other countries, including Belarus and Ukraine, have been fading. Not completely, there is still some interaction, a lot of things happen outside the public field, but you can see that people from Russia are barely doing any activities.

Personal conflicts could also play a role, i.e. a certain part of Russian anarchists could not adequately relate to the situation of comrades in Ukraine and their needs. They could not adequately perceive criticism or any emotional reactions on the part of Ukrainians, which, of course, leads to escalation in conflicts and lack of dialog. I think it is important here to simply fight against one's ego, to stop feeling sorry for oneself and making excuses. Instead, we need to fight for strong comradeship, for common dialogs, common goals. And not only to put this above the current conflicts, which are not going anywhere, but to see it as a force that allows us to overcome contradictions and solve problems. I think a coordinated movement in the countries mentioned above is possible, but

sian movement, I don't know about the European movement. But it seems to me that this unstructured foundation, which allows you to do whatever you want and leave at any time, is at the heart of these Z-antifa and what we talked about above. It's a product of unstructured social circles, where anyone can change their mind every day and not be held responsible for anything.

A: I have an addition to what Zhenya said. Indeed, this lack of active people with a lack of organization, long distances and weak connections seems to reinforce the situation in which we don't know how to criticize and be criticized. As a consequence, it is easy to become marginalized – to take criticism personally rather than as a direction for you and your initiative towards something more conscious, more coherent, more effective.

L: If you look through the biggest social network groups, there is a lot about the war, the struggle against it, desertion, aid, advice on how to avoid conscription, writing letters to anti-war prisoners – and all this is certainly important, but I didn't see any "bombardment" of readers with the need to maintain solidarity with Ukrainian comrades, calls to donate to them (as part of the struggle and expression of solidarity). I have a thought as to why this is the case, but I'd like to ask this question to you. Because to the uninvolved reader it might seem that the Russian anti-war anarchist movement is very focused on itself. They say there is repression, we fight it, we support prisoners, we do sabotage. And this, of course, is quite a lot for what can be done on Russian territory to stop the aggressor. But I don't see that there is that bridge. That is, Ukrainian anarchists are fighting for themselves, fighting for survival, and here Russian anarchists are also fighting a little bit for survival, a little bit for freedom, for the remnants of the freedom that we have, but you can't see where they are doing it. Perhaps it's, as Zhenya said, in the form of some pitfalls, but perhaps it's really just not there or it's lacking.

A: I would guess that it has to do with security. If the authors of the channels are counting on any audience inside Russia and on

about how tough the fighting is, to worry. It's all a very large emotional and physical load, it takes quite a lot of resources, and eventually people started to drop out. Several activists were absent for six months, and now they are back with new strength and are ready to continue. So there are such a periodic regroupings. Someone burns out, withdraws, rests. Some need time, and then people come back.

L: You explained how just a few days before the war there was some division and discussions about who wanted to do what, and I'd like to focus on that a little bit. After the Ukrainian anarchists partially announced that they were going to try their own militarized structures first, but eventually had to join the state armed forces, part of the anarchist movement condemned it, or didn't understand it. And I think you constantly have to face in all sorts of interviews the questions "How come?" So you seem to be flirting with the state, or you seem not to see that the state is also our enemy. So how is it that you take its side or strengthen it? It's clear that you're probably answering for yourself, but if you can present just some spectrum of opinions on this, that would be great. How do you justify this decision? Not to leave, not to defect, as some Western comrades are calling for, but precisely to stay and integrate into the state structures.

K: First of all, Ukrainian anarchists before the war, since 2014, conventionally speaking, were divided into two groups.

One group believed that the conflict with Russia would develop, and that a conflict that was neither moving in or out was an effective way of draining Ukraine, and that sooner or later this conflict would develop into something. And this feeling had been present throughout the eight years since Maidan. This part of the anarchist, or even more broadly speaking, anti-authoritarian movement in Ukraine began to think and somehow search for answers on how they would act in case something more global than just a conflict limited to the territory of Donetsk and Lugansk regions started. A lot of people went to military training, learned basic tactics. These trainings were focused more on the idea of guerrilla warfare. Over

the whole 8 years, up to 80 people periodically attended these trainings.

There was another group of people in the Ukrainian movement who called the conflict and the prospects of invasion more paranoid thoughts than any reality. And they were more focused on conflicts with the right-wing movement, on analyzing and confronting there, or on actions without a perspective of a future military conflict.

Since 2017, I also started participating in these [military] trainings. And I will say for myself that all this time, when you go from your city to another city in winter with local trains you think: "What's all this for?" – you get paranoid, you think about a conflict that is unlikely to happen. I mean, nobody expected it to be such a brutal invasion from all sides. I imagined it as perhaps some localized small expansions of the Donetsk and Luhansk territories of the conflict, but it was hard to imagine such a terrible scale even in the worst case scenarios.

As a result, on February 24, the whole of Ukraine woke up to explosions, sounds of bombs, and rumbling. My neighbor woke me up at 4 a.m. and said: "That's it, the war has started. My first reaction was: "Listen, stop being paranoid, it's silly, there can't be explosions in Kiev, it's probably someone just launching fireworks". Half an hour later you look at the news feed, and indeed the airport has been shelled, and some critical infrastructure has been hit. And you're sitting there trying to understand. I will say this: since 2017, I assumed that something like this would start, prepared myself mentaly like other people, prepared myself practically, but to realize that here and now your life, your loved ones, your friends are threatened with death because of the colonial, great imperial thinking of our neighbors – it is very difficult. To realize the nearness of that death, to realize that reality has changed. To realize that here and now you may not see your relatives, you may not see your mother from Kharkiv, where Russian columns are already coming. You think: "What to do?" Of course, simplifying, we can

exchange of thoughts and criticism in the collective. There are also no structures that can solve everyday issues of people in the community and outside: the community Economy, mutual aid, health care, education, ideology, physical self-defense – the state interferes in all these spheres and takes away our initiative to organize these spheres. We don't feel responsible for these spheres and we can't organize anything. There are still many points of view on anarchism, ways of struggle, which leads to a subjective perception of how we should approach struggle. There is a lack of a comprehensive understanding of unity. Individuals and collectives often find it difficult to approach different groups and situations based on points of common ground. Instead, an atmosphere of mutually competing closed groups is created. Or on contrary, groups gather under larger umbrella organizations and lose their own lines of struggle and leverage. And one scenario reinforces the other. That is, to dissolve completely into larger coalitions and campaigns or to be closed and sometimes elitist. This happens because of weak integrity or lack of long term goals. Confidence in a solid foundation may allow us to enter and dignify ourselves in more controversial situations, and I think we have lacked that. A lack of patience, persistence in organized activities is also present. Very little structure, organizational framework and experience is passed on and accumulated from generation to generation. The outlook is limited to immediate, short-term issues, and this also leads to a lack of a long-term perspective. And lastly, we can mention that there was a lack of involvement within Russian society in order to communicate our ideas and practices, to influence it in some way, to act organically in it. For example, if there were anarchist organizations that directly organize on social issues directly with people and have connections and influence in trade unions. I know there is or was something like that, but it's not enough. Perhaps then our actions could be more effective.

L: It sounds quite profound. In fact, this is not only a problem of the Russian movement; I can say the same about the Belaru-

A: I also discovered at some point in social networks that many people are experiencing Russophobia, in their opinion. This is part of the people who left Russia, and they are just engaged in fighting windmills, arguing with themselves that there is no collective guilt and responsibility, because I personally fought well. This is something I recognize and see from time to time until now.

L: In this case, I'm asking in general, to what extent did the movement respond adequately, in your opinion? Or did it remain in its usual scheme – in the scheme of working in peaceful life and reproducing the same types of activities, perhaps with a different theme and orientation? Maybe something was missing for the movement to work more coherently?

G: In terms of assessing the adequacy of the response, it [the response] is adequate in the sense that you can understand it, but it is not adequate in terms of expectation/reality. The movement actually lacked a lot of things. First, people – in recent years, decades, a lot of people have left their communities. And even before that, there was a lack of a revolutionary movement. And in general, people who come to the communities, as a rule, do not consider themselves part of any movement throughout Russia or even around the world, because the anarchist movement is international. They mostly act out of their own motivations or desires. That is, there is no understanding of what community is, of comradeship as the basis of relations between people in this movement, no understanding of how to create such relations with comrades in organizations. Instead, what prevails is a culture of liberalism, where decisions are made from an individual point of view, mostly based on comfort, on a subconscious fear of facing contradictory situations. And our struggle is based on idealism, and we are really disconnected from the reality that real people live in. And there is a certain dogmatism in different contradictory situations.

Let us return to the question of what the movement lacked. It lacks any formal structures, organizations, which leads to informal hierarchy and a lack of standards, opportunities for an organized

say: fight, flight or freeze on the spot – the first reaction of the brain depending on the person. Well, some fled, some stayed. And regarding the question of criticizing anarchists and why anarchists joined such structures: for example, you wake up and realize that you want to become part of the resistance, you have experience in guerrilla, tactical fights of some kind specific skills, How can you apply them? You can organize yourself with your comrades and go to the forests to be a partisan. But you look at the situation and you see that the government has not fallen, large resources are being organized, there is an institution like the territorial defense, and this is an association of civilians who have some knowledge of tactical battles, skills in handling weapons. They organize themselves and they're already starting to patrol the city. Groups are being organized there. And why not start there, under smarter command, organizing the defense of the city?

At first, everyone was working out, and for the anti-authoritarians who were somehow preparing for this, it was clear that in case the government fell, we would not be left on our own, not knowing what to do. We would organize ourselves into a group and pursue action inside an already occupied country against the invader. But it's cool that this didn't happen and that we managed to organize ourselves as equals against such an enemy. So there is artillery warfare going on now, not guerrilla warfare. Let's not look to a hundred years ago, how Makhno fought in guerrilla warfare conditions, it's not exactly the current format of warfare. Now there's an artillery war going on, a war with a very well organized enemy, and it's hard to imagine how you could counter that with a small group of people. So people have organized themselves into more institutionalized units.

There was an attempt to make a political project, an anarchist platoon, in the early days of the invasion, but it failed. People wanted efficiency, but the Ukrainian bureaucracy and unsuccessful command did not allow them to fight at the front in hot spots or to prove themselves. Therefore, people periodically began to

leve, to look for more combat-ready units and to participate in the fighting directly, rather than sitting in Kiev.

L: You mentioned that SolCol is primarily concerned with supporting those who have gone to the front from among our comrades. And, understandably, some of your activities depend very much on the solidarity of the rest of the international anarchist movement. You are probably oriented first of all towards Western anarchists or Central European anarchists, because at least there are probably more means and more developed movement. And so it's been a year of war and I'd like to know how much you can assess in general – is there any decline in aid? Do you receive enough solidarity from foreign comrades? What does that solidarity depend on in general? How strong has it been in your opinion? Maybe you have imagined an international movement before and it has, for example, exceeded your expectations or, on the contrary, has not been active enough?

K: There are about 10–15 groups that periodically throughout this year have been helping us: bringing humanitarian supplies, organizing benefit concerts, organizing lectures, any actions in support of us and the soldiers, and we are very grateful to them. That is, of course, our whole team exists only thanks to mutual aid and solidarity, and for this we are very grateful. And we are trying to expand this sphere and to be more open to new proposals and to talk more openly about our views, about who we help and who we don't. But if you want to be more critical, I will just give you one example. Now our team is trying to focus on connecting with the international, international leftist environment, to reorganize its resources to help Ukrainian anarchists, anti-authoritarians – in general, to help the Ukrainian leftist movement to resist and survive, first of all, in a situation where, if we lose, we will all die. And those who are left as support activists and soldiers – that is, we have no future if we lose to Russia. So, in fact, this is primarily a question not of building some great leftist political future, but of the survival of people, individuals, activists.

(Ukrainian comrades). It remains undercover, invisible to outside eyes, and, of course, we hope that these "cards" will come in handy at some point.

L: By the way, you say you don't want to waste time on Z-antifa, but I was also reminded of it today. Back in 2014, some people were going to fight in Donbass, and it felt like it was impossible not to understand this situation in 8 years. You can read, talk to different comrades from different countries, to those who were forced to flee from Donetsk, Luhansk, Crimea. It shocked me that in such a situation, a super-uncertain situation, still someone didn't understand everything. You say that it's mostly "reds", but that's debatable. For example, the scandal with Zhuk [vocalist of the anarcho-punk band "Brigadir" – note], who defended a friend who worked at a defense company, using the excuse that a person needs to earn money, and that he was "for the proletariat, not for a faceless something". There were some other punk hardcore bands. I didn't remember their names, but it just looks like some kind of circus, especially from people who are not the first day in the movement. And I see this discourse not so rarely, and these are often people who have extensive Telegram feeds. That is, I have the feeling that these people are influencing minds, propagandizing the agenda that there is no guilt, no responsibility of people, because "the war is being waged by those in power, and we anarchists are clean and no one can blame us, and especially we do not owe anything to our Ukrainian comrades". How relevant is this discourse, this message in the movement? Or are these really some renegades? They sit in their channels, communicate with their subscribers, but this has little effect on the anti-war movement you mentioned, which is not visible, but chooses to be invisible, unlike those who shout and shout out something.

R: I think it's the last of what you have listed. These things don't really reach us at DIANA, because almost nobody uses Instagram, we don't have time to read such channels and such people, but yes, undoubtedly, they exist. But I think they are rather renegades.

You participate in different collectives and even in different regions, do you and other anarchists observe any common analysis, or is it just single voices?

R: Well, starting with us, we see that Putin and the Putin regime need this war to hold on to power. There are certain imperial ambitions, certain colonial legacies – the so-called "Russian state" – and all this also plays a role. There is also a struggle for resources, territory and geopolitical influence. It's all very complex. War has always been a powerful tool for pressuring people inside and outside the country.

We see this war as invasive, maximally ideologized, it simply denies the rights of peoples to self-determination and is a continuation of Russia's actions in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Syria.

And in terms of the anarchist movement – unfortunately, we can't talk about the kind of movement we would like to see. We can't talk about a revolutionary movement, we can instead talk about a community. In this respect, the anarchist community has always stood somewhat apart from the general anti-war agenda and from what was happening in Russia before that. When the liberal opposition was still hoping for a peaceful protest, it was already obvious to anarchist organizations/collectives that even with a change of face/authority it would not get better. There has been anti-war anarchist agitation from the beginning and still is, and there are groups practicing armed struggle, such as BOAK (a militant organization of anarcho-communists). But there have also been some strange episodes, Z-antifa, I don't even want to take up the time of this podcast discussing them, but it has to be said that there is also such a thing. All these "red" people are dreaming of Stalin, the USSR, etc., and in principle their position is legitimate, since the Russian government actively uses pseudo-antifascist rhetoric and nostalgia for the USSR to justify the war in part. But I think that most of the anarchists' work remains invisible to the outside eye – the connections, infrastructure, and various interactions both within the regions and with other countries

And such an example: the comprehensive international leftist support is now competing with a simple IT office from Dnipro, which has also organized a volunteer movement and is somehow trying to help the army with resources. That is, there is room for growth, and it is very strange that these resources are not enough directly, and indeed some IT initiatives sometimes collect more money to help soldiers. Maybe they do it more efficiently than we do, maybe it is an oversight on the part of the networking department of our organization, but there is not enough support. We can't cover all the soldiers' requests, and they come up regularly.

There was a very large influx of help in the first few months, especially in March. It was the most donor-driven month. The invasion started on the 24th, and already in March people started to realize that they should help Ukraine, to solidarize, and that was the month when the most donations came. And gradually with each month this number of donations fell. And since August we had to fight for attention and resources. To prove that this problem is real. But we do not despair, and this is not a reason to stop. On the contrary, it means that there is room to grow, that there is someone to solidarize with, to explain our position. And, in fact, we continue to do that.

L: And if we turn to the other side of the world, if we look at anarchists from Russia, for example? From public posts, from some publications, perhaps even mutual publications, it seems as if we can't see that there is a conversation between Ukrainian and Russian anarchists, we can't see some kind of bridge, we can't see some kind of dialog. And even more so, we don't see any interaction. And here's my question: is it just me who doesn't see it in the public sphere, or is it really not happening at a level that could be called regular, stable, somehow formalized?

K: For the last six months, I have been doing more networking, and there has been no contact with Russian anarchists. That is, there have been no greetings, no questions about how things are going, no offers of help, no offers of coordination, no such ques-

tions from our side or theirs. There are a lot of people with former Russian citizenship in Ukraine. Many Russians came to Ukraine before the war and stayed here, including activists. Some of them are now fighting at the front, and they are fighting in the status of volunteers, because Ukraine does not like to officially register Russians in the military. That is, if something happens, they will be treated as civilians who suffered from the war, not as military with a machine gun, insurance, official salaries, payments, and so on. They don't have all that, and yet they're fighting and defending Ukraine, and it's very difficult for them to be here officially. So it means periodic conversations with the security services, it is periodically necessary to prove that you are here legally, that you are doing some work. And they do a lot of work: helping the military, organizing humanitarian trips. I am interested in working with these people, I understand them, I understand their difficulties. Not only are they officially oppressed at the state level, but they also feel a lot of pressure from Ukrainian society (and it is clear why this is happening).

For myself, I will say that I personally am not very interested in communicating with anarchists from Russia, because, I confess, I feel great pain and resentment towards everything that is east of Kharkiv, towards all these people. And it's hard to just start some kind of cooperation, due to this heaviness. And even somehow rationally you understand that these people are doing their opposition inside, secretly organizing sabotage, it's cool, cool, I support it, but it's still somehow humanly hard to communicate on a human level

I'm sure we have enough guys in our collective who are very inspired by what anarchists are doing in Russia. And in general, the resistance that is happening in Russia is the only adequate option of protest for me. What is being done, they are doing good, right, cool. But still, I'm such a skeptic that it's not enough for me, and somehow it still doesn't ease the pain of all this time.

But anyway, a significant part of society still holds a neutral positions. We can only speculate about the reasons for this – maybe people think that nothing will change if they say or do something, so they do nothing. But I don't think it's that simple. This is a complex situation, consisting of many years of propaganda, attempts to deprive citizens and women of agency. And during all these years the state has succeeded in transferring people to such an apolitical way of life, and they have silently handed over their lives into the hands of those in power. However, people are tired of living in a country that wages war and sends people to the meat grinder, killing other people. There is a sense of loss of hope for change. Change is present in some part of society. Our acquaintances, relatives, colleagues reacted in different ways throughout this year. Someone almost immediately took the side of power, war and continued the line started by Putin, and someone gradually radicalized in terms of ideas, we can say, went to the side of good. Some people remain "in the tank" now and then and are a living illustration of the meme "what happened?"

Things changed after the mobilization, of course. People were more afraid, but many people, despite this, continued some kind of silent or active support of the regime. Although now it is no longer explained by the old elements of propaganda – Ukronazis, Banderovites, NATO confrontation. Now many people are under the influence of fear and support all this because they are afraid of losing, and this, in their logic, will affect the quality of life: it will become worse than "in the 90s". People may have had this fear a long time ago, or it may have been engineered by the authorities, but it doesn't matter. What is important is that people are seriously afraid of the consequences, afraid of the future.

L: I see. Anya already touched a little bit on how she perceived [the situation] on a subjective level and how the environment reacted to it. I think it's partly or entirely an anarchist environment.

or less accumulation of people, everyone acted as chaotically as possible.

L: Interesting. Zhenya, maybe you'd like to comment on that as well? Maybe share something regionally specific that you've observed or something that hasn't been mentioned yet? I don't know, from what I can think of, it's a kind of online argument, a tug of war. To what extent do the opinion polls that have been conducted over the course of this year reflect reality? It's as if there are two sides. One side that's as if to say, "Okay, yeah, all is lost, it's mostly hardcore fascists and brainwashed people who live there." For example, I've already said in another podcast that my mom (a person who had no interest in politics and wasn't even Russian at all) really changed her mind in two months, and I just lost it. TV has consumed her. And I think she's not alone. The other side says, "No, it's not that clear-cut, in fact they're all against the war, they're just afraid to speak out." To what extent, in general, do you feel there is this division between those who actively support, or at least politically support, indifferently perceive what is happening, because "the authorities will decide everything", and those who actively or inactively oppose the war? What is the balance of power?

Zhenya (DIANA participant): I think the situation is pardoxical, although it clarified a lot of things actually. At the beginning there was a kind of shock, behind which you could see the dissent and dissatisfaction that had accumulated over many years. Many people seemed to burst through, and for some it became a decisive event for a transition from a neutral position to a clear statement. But on the whole, in our opinion, society has become even more polarized, even more so than in 2014. Some have gone even more into chauvinism, even more into supporting the "Russian world". Others sort of accepted it. Some began taking more active steps. Drunken hurray-patriots became even more zealous hurray-patriots, dissenters, on the contrary, went into even more radical dissent. This drew a certain boundary and forced us to orient ourselves according to the system of "one's own/another".

L: In your opinion or the people around you, what do people (I mean anti-authoritarians, anarchists in general around the world) need to do now or would be optimal to do in order to end the war sooner?

K: Well, the war will end only with the victory of Ukraine, that is, there are no intermediate options here, that there can be some kind of peace treaty again for 8 years, while Russia will build up its forces to attack once again. This nightmare must end and it must end in a victory. People are tired of war. That fatigue is understandable, but the only thing I can say is "keep working in support of Ukraine". There are some people who don't like who we support, for example. We support a very large number of people, someone thinks that some people are wrong, they went the wrong way, but these are the right ones, they should be supported. For me the most important thing is the support movement itself, it doesn't matter, you may not support us as a collective, but support the soldiers on the front who you sympathize with. So some kind of support should continue, and regularly. We have logistics set up, that is, communication with the fighters, coordination, cooperation, registration of cargo, transportation of things, all of this is already settled, more or less, there is room to grow, of course, but it works. As for the international movement, we should not forget, we should not dwell on the fact that we sent 50 tourniquets to Ukraine – that's it, we have made our great contribution to the victory, we will now do something of our own there.

I mean, it's important to me that the support doesn't run out. I think to our soldiers too, but it unfortunately constantly eats up resources, and not only resources. It eats the lives and health of people. Let's just say, not to give your brain a chance to heal that wound and keep it open all the time. That's the kind of sadistic motivation. You always want to forget something bad, I mean when something bad exists, you want to get away quickly into some comfort zone and turn away from it, and that's normal, and it's understandable why people turn away from it. But people are turning

away, and other people continue to die in Ukraine. So we will drag this out until the end, those who are in Ukraine, until the end of the war, until victory. And it will be very good if foreign comrades can help us to go all the way.

L: Super, thank you so much for the conversation, I really marvel at how much great work you're doing, and I can only imagine what kind of emotional, material, and physical effort it really carries for you.

K: Cool, thank you so much for inviting me to talk, to vent.

L: In the second part of the episode, we talked to Mira, another member of the Solidarity Collectives. She left Kiyv and does fundraising and information work in Europe, so we discussed with her the situations she faces on her travels: accusations of fascism and criticism of the armed struggle from Western comrades.

Mira: I am mainly engaged in trying to dialog with foreign comrades, making presentations in different cities and countries. I try to raise money there, I try to answer questions, often uncomfortable ones. I try to keep them engaged and interested, because, unfortunately, concepts like war face the fast fashion problem.

L: When you are delivering information about the war, delivering information about the reality that is now in Ukraine, about how the Ukrainian comrades, the Ukrainian anarchists have reacted, how they have chosen to react to this war, what opinions or positions do you encounter in Western Europe? From what I understand, you're mostly in Central and Western Europe, right?

M: Yes, mostly people show solidarity. They react the way I would expect them to. I think any normal person understands that war is terrible. There are exceptions, but mostly people react with interest. There are groups that have been helping from Europe all this year, collecting money for us, buying us some things we need, sending us things and caring in every possible way and asking how we are doing. There are less active people, but they are also interested. In principle, one or two people per speech are usually either strongly, so to speak, influenced by the Russian TV agenda,

over time that feeling was replaced by the realization that I was doing what I was good at. In this case, the labor of caring. Now it no longer feels to me like something insufficient or something inappropriate.

As for the social situation, I was, frankly speaking, depressed by the protests that began in Moscow. I was in Moscow on February 24, and in early March as well. The people I am close to pretty quickly shifted into small groups that were doing decentralized actions – forms of agitation, forms of protest. Spreading leaflets, painting graffiti, since it was impossible to do nothing. However, participation in protests (where everyone ran screaming from OMON) was too frustrating and did not feel like something that could make the impact.

Subjectively, peaceful protest seems to be a form of dialog with the authorities. And when the real war begins – a reality in which we were not prepared for and for which we were not adapted at all – to enter into a dialog with the authorities, who have been carrying out repression for the last several years and are waging war on the territory of Ukraine right now, seems absolutely foolish to me. That's why among those I talk to, disillusionment with the street protests formed quite quickly and the protest movement went on to other forms.

L: So it wasn't the number of people or even the "quality" of the people who came out that depressed you, but rather the fact that they were willing to express their opinions, but not to stand up and push to the end so that what they stand for could win, triumph?

A: The protests of '21 also showed that there is absolutely no common agenda that would seriously unite the people who took to the streets. In the spring of '21 people participated in protests because "things are very bad", but what should be done about it doesn't seem to be at the surface. In the spring of '22 it was even sadder, as fear, perhaps of repression, had an even greater force. And indeed, people just scattered, in Moscow I never saw any more

Reaction of Russian society and anarchists to the invasion

Today I have activists from Russia: Zhenya from the movement of Irkutsk anarchists – abbreviated as DIANA – and Anya, a participant of the Solidarity Zone project.

The "Solidarity Zone" was created to support prisoners persecuted for militant anti-war actions. After all, often it is they who are out of the information field and do not meet the criteria for assistance of human rights organizations. "DIANA" within the framework of anti-war actions writes analytics of anti-war resistance from the anarchist point of view taking into account the Siberian specifics. It also conducts strong anti-war agitation in Irkutsk.

Lera: Traditionally, we start the podcast with the reaction of the local society (in this case Russian society) to what happened on February 24, namely Russia's invasion of Ukraine. What was the reaction, in your opinion? What kind of reaction did you observe? What did you read, what did you see then, in February of '22? And did it [the reaction] change in any way over time? Were there any tendencies to intensify the struggle? Did mobilization, for example, affect the mood of the people in Russia?

Anya (Solidarity Zone participant): It will probably be easier for me to start with a subjective opinion. We started looking for people who had been arrested for militant actions practically in the first weeks of the full-scale war. We started doing this as a group of comrades who had also been involved in prisoner support before that. If at first I, for example, felt some guilt that I was doing the wrong thing, seemingly the same thing I had always done,

because channels like Russia Today are still broadcasting in many European countries; or they have very dogmatic, anti-imperialist positions: where everything is very black and white for them, everything is very easy and simple, and, therefore, if you support the army, then everything is bad, you are a fool, you don't understand, and you should do otherwise. By the way, I have never been given an answer as to how we should do things differently.

L: Could you voice some kind of average position of a Western anarchist who is rather theoretical in his approach to you? What would he say to you? So that we can understand what kind of criticism this is.

M: Because it's individual, one or two people, I wouldn't say they directly have some middle ground. I've encountered different kinds. Starting from "this campaign against Putin has been going on for 9 years, oh my god, what a horror, get off Putin, poor unfortunate Russians, like, here you are oppressing them, roughly speaking, with your stories here and the canceling of Russian culture in general". This happened even before the full-scale invasion (i.e. the war has been going on for much longer, since 2014, and I think that the media war, such a hybrid war, may have started earlier against Ukraine), I faced this in Spain when I said: I am an anarchist from Ukraine. And they said to me: you are all fascists. So it seem they have access only to Russian TV there, apparently, somehow it's already very hard.

L: Listen, is this Russian TV? Or can it be linked to the fact that just because the war started (especially in the eastern part of Ukraine in 2014), and after it started, I understand there was some propaganda from the position of some leftist forces, maybe Russian, partly Ukrainian? And when Western leftists tried to deal with the situation with Donbass – and as far as I know, very many, especially Southern Europe, chose the position of defense of Russian anti-fascism, which was seen as participation in the liberation of Donbass – then it looked like some kind of popular struggle against

oppression on one side and on the other. Is this still a product of television or state propaganda?

M: Yes, there was a Stalinist group called Borot'ba, which traveled around Europe and put various things in people's ears. From time to time I am told some horror stories about hundreds of anti-fascists killed in Ukraine. Frankly speaking, I am not sure that we even had hundreds of anti-fascists to be killed. Now, in Italy, for example, I know for a fact that the local Stalinists – who I wouldn't call comrades and out of this context, understandably – are quite active. There are surprisingly many of them there. They're like "zetkas." We often hear in the news: "Russians have painted something somewhere." And I think to myself: if this is the south of Europe, I'm not sure about it. Unfortunately, there are groups there that are almost… But they don't go to my talks, or they just keep quiet. In Italy I had a situation where they were calling to beat me, and they painted the entrance to the room with the presentation with "Z". But in the end I did not see these people in any way, no one said anything: either they were scared and did not come, because there was security, or they were, but kept silent.

In general, I didn't notice them in any way, but I read their posts: they have posts on Facebook, on Telegram channels about Donbass, about socialism in Donbass, and some of their disgusting comrades have already died in Donbass. Either deceived, I don't even know how "disgusting" they are, maybe it's not worth it…

L: I understand that in this case we are not talking about anarchists criticizing Ukrainian anarchists who took up arms and joined the army for their inconsistency and support of the state. We're talking about the authoritarian left, who are more likely to criticize the Ukrainian "right". It doesn't matter to them that you joined some army, because it's basically normal. It is more important that you are fascists, as Putin says.

M: They see Russia, Belarus, and Donbass as some kind of socialism. Of course, it's hard to believe, but people are far away, and somehow that's how they see it. Why do I encounter this? Because,

solidarity with, who we will repudiate. And how quickly we will enter into solidarity or disengage.

Thanks for the interesting conversation.

M: Thank you, too, for calling me.

What's the bottom line? First, no matter who is in front of you, empires or national movement, their logic of development is the same. First unification, then expansion. The fact that empires are larger and therefore certainly more dangerous, I will not deny it, does not make nationalism the lifeline of humanity. And this point is important to reflect, to stop fighting cultural elements and to start fighting states that use cultural elements as one of the weapons in their struggle for unification. In the long run, nationalism can give rise to new dictatorships and empires, it is important to keep this in mind.

Second, people's support for imperialism or nationalism is the result of the propaganda of either the state or those forces that want to become the head of a state or a region of a state, or to form a new one. It is the state, following its own logic, not the interests of people, that puts into their heads the necessity to unify, to fight for resources, to find enemies, and so on. Without completely removing responsibility from those people who broadcast these ideas in society, it is important to clearly distinguish between the carriers infected by propaganda and the source of the infection. The carriers are the population, and there, perhaps, according to the degree of awareness, according to the degree of contamination, some officials-propagandists… And we are getting to the fact that the state apparatus is what often consciously, and sometimes unconsciously, broadcasts these ideas. If we start looking for the source in people without paying attention to their individual views, to their actions, molding them all into a pile of national unconsciousness, which is subject to some millennial mentality, we will unwittingly only play along with this state view of the world.

L: It seems logical enough to me, what you're saying. And as much as I listen, I realize how much we too, even though we reflect more about it, we read more about it, but nevertheless, we too tend to place ourselves within these set frameworks of thinking about the world. It is in our hands how we will deal with it, how we will analyze the situation, how we will act, who we will stand in

as far as I understand, there are quite a lot of people in the south of Europe who consider themselves "general leftists", and it's as if they are both here and there, so they can relay the positions of these groups as well. Again, I wouldn't call these people anything good. That's why they have such a mess in their heads…

Yes, there are those who try to criticize precisely from an anti-authoritarian position. They come and speak in slogans from posters. A person starts asking me some questions: "How come, yes, here is the state, yes, you support it there!" I say, "What solution do you see? We have a full-scale invasion, people are dying, and we need to defend ourselves now. We don't have a Makhnovist army of a million people to fight [together], we don't have any other option. In my opinion and the opinion of my comrades, we have no other option but that a part joins the army and the other part helps them. We try to defend ourselves as best we can in this situation. And I count on some trust and understanding of comrades from other countries that we are doing what we can under the circumstances. We don't live in some ideal society of the future. We live here, now and we have actual problems as they are here and now. In my opinion, as well as in the opinion, again, of many comrades, what we are facing is fascism. And we are fighting fascism. Yes, alongside people who may not be in line with our political views. But at the moment, they're fighting fascism too. It's an interesting turn of events, but I think it's a fact.

I asked a man from Sweden, "If your country was attacked, and there is such an possibility, you are not even in NATO, what would you do?" He said he would fight against war, not for it. That's a very cool phrase, but just what does it mean? Or in Berlin, when I was making a presentation, I said: "Okay, offer us an alternative, I am also against militarism, I don't like war at all". I think very few people in Ukraine like it, including soldiers, and I don't think there are many people who like war – it's not natural or normal. Offer us another way out.

My favorite proposal was to hand out German passports to all Russian men so they could leave and the war would be over. Well, I mean, these are totally unrealistic crazy plans of some kind. I didn't hear anything from such people that I could pay attention to and adopt.

L: Everyone rushed to analyze the situation in March-April: some anarchist federations and other groups made their statements, and all as one stood up in defense of the international proletariat, expressed their solidarity with it, began to deny the war. At the same time, I have the impression that very often many of our comrades in the West (perhaps because they are not in our context, they do not have access to information in our language) did not have the time, for example, to contact their Ukrainian comrades and ask them what they think about this, to find out how they can help the Ukrainian comrades at this moment. They made their statement on the basis of some personal values that they, conventionally, read in books or found in some other way. I have the feeling that this is not just some kind of colonialism, but this attitude towards the so-called Eastern Crosses, that is, the eastern borders of Europe, as if we didn't understand something, we didn't read something from some theorist, and that's why they are going to explain to us how it is right. Did you get that impression, or maybe I'm wrong, and there really were those who wrote to your email and tried to really understand the situation before issuing their statement.

M: There are different people, but mostly the people who come to my speeches are those who ask questions. I think for many people it's an incomprehensible situation, but they are trying to figure it out, and these people are the majority. When someone sits alone and asks his anti-militarist questions in a circle, assuming ready-made answers, giving his own answers, and in general, this person can usually not be interrupted, it is usually a white man in his 40s (according to my statistics). I can walk into a room now and, frankly, simply determine who my opponent is going to be.

Imperialism is essentially just nationalism lumped together from different elements of ethnicities. There may be some dominant ethnicity, there may not even be one. As an example, we can take the Soviet man as opposed to the Russians, or the American nation, and so on. That is, some new formations, just as the French nation was once created out of many ethnoses, and it was difficult to distinguish who dominated from a cultural point of view in this process – it was the state that dominated. And this is important. And it is not only large empires that carry out ethnic cleansing. Just think of Djibouti or Biafra, where recently there was a massacre in Africa simply on ethnic grounds. People were slaughtered simply because the dominant political force, which was either a state or aspired to become one, decided so. And it's not just empires that own nuclear weapons and terrorize populations. North Korea and Iran have nuclear weapons, they have terrorized their populations, they have organized a brutal dictatorship that many empires would envy.

Naturally, liberal democracies will be a slightly different story here. In my opinion, they also follow this logic, they can also turn into empires, they can turn into dictatorships. All these right-wing turns that try to be explained somehow in terms of class reorganization of society, or some unique geopolitical situations, there is nothing new in this. Democracies have very often tried to turn into autocracies, and there is nothing special about phenomena like Trump, or Orban, or Vucic.

It is characteristic of the state to unify, to strengthen, to become more authoritarian. And when it has achieved this, then there are ambitions to expand, often territorially. This is not always ethnically or historically justified. It can be just plain crazy. For example, it is a little-known fact that in the interwar period Poland, the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, sought to acquire overseas colonies. There was absolutely no historical or ethnic background to this. As was often the case with colonization.

a huge empire during the life of one generation. And these are only the most vivid examples, and there are many more to cite. Expansion is opposed not only by external enemies, but also by internal separatists who want to throw off the oppression of the empire and, as a rule, form their own state, because they do not know about stateless alternatives. Although sometimes they do, but these are rare examples. And they will play again according to authoritarian logic on the field of world politics.

Separatism, by the way, is not necessarily caused by cultural differences, we usually divide separatists as ethnic groups. If some "Paleshukis" live in Polesie, then they are separatists. No, ethnic groups within a nation-state can easily coexist in the same way as they do within empires. It can be initially connected, for example, with purely political decisions, as, for example, Ukraine began its history. An interesting fact. From the Cossack liberty, whose population was culturally very close to the population of the southern regions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the southern regions of Muscovy, the Muscovite kingdom. They were simply people who escaped from the state to the steppe territories, which were more prone to nomadic attacks, and there they tried to create their military fortifications and settle down somehow. Some of them engaged in robbery, some in hunting, some of them started to establish settlements. This is how Ukraine was formed, which later grew into a cultural separate phenomenon. But initially, in fact, it was a political decision, not by a single person, but as a trend.

And to overcome such internal turmoil, so that separatism does not arise, so that there is no instability of any regime, states use authoritarianism and unification. This does not only happen with regard to language or traditions, but also in general the subordination of society to the accepted state rules. And here is an important point: if we consider the nation not as an analog of ethnos, but as a modern phenomenon, a product of nation-states, then a multiethnic empire also conducts its nationalism on an imperial scale.

The only place I got it wrong was in Switzerland – there the "opponent" turned out to be one of the most supportive people. I was very uncomfortable later for my lookist tendencies, so to speak. But yes, it's usually a man who sits in the front row, folds his arms, and knows everything in advance. I, for example, when I speak, realize that I have no goal at all to change his mind, because it's impossible. Because for him, anti-militarism is more of a religion than a practical thing. Among my friends, one of the most convinced antimilitarists is Maksym Butkevich, who has been in captivity for 7 months, a Ukrainian anarchist in his youth, I don't know how he is now. So, he is a man of more than antimilitarist views, he joined the army precisely because he is a man of antimilitarist views, because we have such antimilitarism now: we fight war, killing soldiers by joining the army, however illogical it may sound for people who are very dogmatically anti-militarist.

By the way, I consider myself a very anti-militarist person: until last February 24 (2022), I did not support the idea of anarchists going into the army. It's hard for me to know whether I was right or wrong. I couldn't foresee what was happening, and at that point in the movement people also had different opinions. They were not radically different, but rather gradations of gray. That said, positions changed over time, and their position in 2014 may have been different from their position in 2018. It's a tough question in general, and we also ate propaganda about how Crimea seemed to be okay with joining Russia, even though everyone I know from Crimea was against it. I don't know anyone who was happy about this annexation.

In Donbass, too, there was an illusion about people who supported [Russia's military actions]. In general, this idea that "everything is not so unambiguous" there, of course, made the position very unclear. You have to realize that until you experience something, until you have that specific experience, you can't understand it. I mean, I probably didn't understand what people there were experiencing when the war broke out and they were forced to move

out. And most of the people I knew like that took the position that you had to reclaim your home. Now, of course, I fully understand them… Well, maybe, again, I don't want to say fully, because those guys in Europe, they are sitting there, they are sure that they fully understand everything, they just know better how to do it. And then there's NATO….

L: Everyone criticizes this geopolitical approach and the bipolar world, but, in principle, anarchists reproduce it. That is, they say that there is Russia, there is America, they are fighting here, and there are some Belarusians, some Ukrainians dying there – you can forget about it until the titular nations of Europe start dying.

I take it you've also heard questions like, "What are you doing over there against NATO? What about NATO?!" Russian propaganda is actually very good at playing on this and sort of incorporating it into their discourse. I personally don't think that Western anarchists should stop fighting their oppressors and switch to Russia alone. It makes sense that everyone fights locally. Another thing is that for me it is not clear how to overcome this contradiction. On the one hand, Western anarchists fight against NATO, against militarization, against the increasing budget allocations for the military, which is getting stronger. And in principle it is clear that all this military capitalism is being spun, and the interested parties are getting a lot of dividends from it. But on the other hand, there are my comrades who are dying somewhere on the front lines right now, and there is some other oppressor… Is there any way for us, living in different countries and in different discourses and contexts, to find some point of contact where we can show this solidarity with each other?

M: In general, for some reason NATO is mostly heard in Germany (among the countries I've been to). The others are somehow not very interested. By the way, the talk is not about America, but about NATO, and I understand that many Germans see themselves as the main evil, they have this habit. And they say, "NATO is us, we are NATO, and it is necessary that there should be Russia, which

And now about what imperialism is. Many people mistakenly believe that imperialism and nationalism are opposites. As you say, the emotional first reaction that comes to a normal person is to remember that we were part of an empire, and since the empire imposed a certain cultural policy here, it means that we need to go the opposite way: we need to raise nationalism or some of its features to the banner, because it is the opposite phenomenon, based on the fact that separatists often oppose empires, empires oppose separatists, and so on. However, if we close our eyes to the fact that the empire is larger quantitatively and has greater opportunities qualitatively (and this is certainly true), then in essence nation-states and empires are equivalent phenomena. They are identical in the logic of their development and have two main vectors: expansion and unification.

L: And by expansion, do you mean territorial expansion?

M: First of all, this is territorial expansion, i.e. some kind of external expansion. It may not necessarily be the seizure of new territories, but the acquisition of influence.

L: For example, the claim to Smolensk and Bialystok, right?

M: For example, in the case of Moldova – a claim to Transnistria. In the case of Belarus, yes, perhaps to Bialystok, Vilna, and so on. There are many such examples, but let's not go into specifics, I will start with a more general one, what I understand by expansion.

Any state in general is inclined to expansion, because in conditions of competition with other states, to increase resources, not necessarily territorially, but simply to buy a mine on the territory of a neighboring state or something else means to increase the chances of survival for a small state. And maybe to acquire some competitive advantages, if it is a competition of empires. And absolutely any current empire, and even in the past, started as a small state, absolutely any empire. There are many examples of expansion by compact nation-states in history. For example, Japan, which became an empire. Or Macedonia, which Alexander the Great simply turned from a small province into

separate mentality, we will be wrong in analyzing the essence of these phenomena, and thus we will not be able to adequately prevent the repetition of the situation in another place and time. This is the kind of theory that, as I said, will be needed in the future. It is unlikely that we will be able to use it here and now in this emotional state and given our small resources, but we must use it in the future, under future generations of anarchists. Now it has become important to understand that it is necessary to have a developed infrastructure within the movement, self-defense skills in order for anarchists to be an autonomous force from a power point of view, and not only to be intellectually distinct and separate. And without them one cannot expect political independence.

Returning to the question of the corrosive influence of the ideology of the Russian world, or some might say "imperial mentality", I think it is important to address two such key concepts that are mentioned here – "mentality" as such and "imperialism".

In my opinion, mentality is not some genetic peculiarities of ethnic groups, something so insurmountable that it is embedded in our consciousness from birth. No. If we can talk about the existence of such a controversial concept as mentality at all, then only as regional cultural peculiarities. And these peculiarities are to a great extent formed, among other things, under the influence of political regimes, which by virtue of some historical circumstances, often very accidentally, were formed on this territory. The part of culture that is responsible for transmitting political values, like all culture, is under the strong influence of the state. It is the state that controls the media, education, programs of cultural events. These are very important parts of our life. In other words, the state to a great extent shapes for centuries what can be called mentality in its political part. And it looks like a certain spiral, where people try to influence politics under the influence of old propaganda patterns of past regimes, and the current regime seeks to either strengthen these patterns, if they are in line with its policies, or to change them.

would definitely oppose us. It is not very clear to me why they need to have a counterweight for that. It turns out that we have a very big evil, and so we need to keep the other evil, so that they fight there, and we will be the winner.

I don't think so at all. And there is something like this: "Well, Russia is just a little thing, but we have a big problem with NATO! I look at these Germans, and I think: I don't know, guys, I think we have a bigger fight going on there now – that's one. Two – the big question is: what can you do about NATO at the moment? Well, here you are sitting in your social centers and you are against NATO, so what? Does it affect you in any way? Does it? We have a real battle going on there with the evil that we have, and we have a chance to win this war. What are your options? Well, that's a big question. There's China – there's plenty of evil in the world, as well as other tough countries. Iran is doing fine, Turkey too… Why such concentration on NATO?

You know what that reminds me of? I once had a conversation with a man from Moscow, and I was saying something about problems with some nationalists, we had a conflict, someone beat someone up or something like that. He said: "You have a funny Ukrainian nationalism over there, but we have a great-powerful nationalism, powerful, so to speak. It's the same story with NATO: people have a deep feeling that everything here is powerful, so to speak, and influences the whole world, and everything that happens elsewhere is not so important, and we need to look only at geopolitical goals. But again, how much can anarchists in any of these countries influence geopolitical goals? I have a big question. And doesn't this discourse distract them from the real issues? Maybe that's why it's not just Russia imposing it? It's a great distraction in general when anarchists aren't preoccupied with what they can change, but sit around and discuss NATO endlessly.

Well, and I still hope that our culture, our values suggest that we take into account the opinions of the people who are the subjects of this struggle and not label them. When people are so convinced

that they don't want to listen to me, they want to find a person in Ukraine who will confirm what they think. And so they look for him. They will find him, and it will be some, I don't know, grandfather living in their neighborhood. Here he told them, and they will carry it around like Russians carry around a babka with a red flag. So this is a category of people who are so convinced that it is useless to discuss with them. But I am glad that they are there, because many people who have similar questions may be too polite to ask them, and this person comes and gives me the opportunity to ask him counter questions about what we should do, where we are going, and why he thinks that things are like this and not otherwise. And it is often interesting to ask questions about where they get their information from. They read the Russian media, among other things.

L: We've talked to you today about the spirit of solidarity or maybe the gaps in that solidarity, and I'd like to ask you what are your impressions from this year or maybe some sentiment?

M: The collectives who, in fact, have been helping all year long, asking, buying – their help is hard to overestimate. On the other hand, disappointment in the Russian movement, including personal disappointment in some people who may be helping… Mostly people who don't live in Eastern Europe. Of course, you also have to take into account that these people are far away, and for them all of this is in a slightly different context, or there was no context at all, if they are Americans.

Again, it's such a bad thing that bad things draw more attention to themselves. Even you and I, as much as we talked, mostly about all these minuses, although, damn, there are some people I've already forgotten about who suddenly write to me that they have collected thousands of dollars for us and ask what we need. It is clear that you have to talk to people, and, in general, except for sectarians and crazy people, you can talk to people, you can negotiate with them. We are not such a big movement, we don't have a lot of resources, and we need help. There are people who

The two countries were united by a common linguistic space, and by the presence of a major city or perhaps two cities in Russia that were intellectual centers. First of all, translators who could analyze foreign theory and who, in turn, were oriented towards Western anarchists were concentrated there. And we received this information as if through an intermediary in the form of Russian-speaking translators. Yes, there is probably such a chain of dependence: people in more prosperous countries have more opportunities to maintain their information resources, to theorize, to create portals, to create websites, to technically provide all this, to learn to be translators. And people from less prosperous areas receive this information through a chain. First it comes to Moscow, then it goes equally to Irkutsk and Minsk, and from Minsk it can go to Baranovichi or somewhere else. And this is the logic of urbanism, the logic of statehood, which the state as a civilization together with capitalism has built, and we are simply in this chain of receiving information. And yes, there is certainly the heritage of the fact that Belarus was once part of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, that we are part of a single information space, that we were for a long time under the influence of the policy of Russification, i.e. cultural unification. All this should not be discarded. But the important point here is how we treat it in the present and how we analyze it.

Coming smoothly to the question of nationalism, I have a lot to say on this subject, but from the start it is necessary to emphasize the connection between the existence of the state and the emergence of wars and empires. That is, the state as a phenomenon in general, without taking into account its scale. And the consequences of it, such as the emergence of wars, separatism, the emergence of nation-states and the emergence of empires. As long as we think that the Third Reich or the Russian Federation are historical temporal phenomena, that they have no analogues, that it has never happened before or that it cannot happen again in the future; as long as we think that Germans or Russians have some special

which has a certain historical context. Our comrades from Russia grew up in Russia, many of them grew up in Moscow or at least socialized in Moscow. If I ask a person from Moscow and a person from Irkutsk, they may have completely different opinions.

When I came to the movement, I had the feeling that the movement in Russia was more developed in terms of infrastructure, that it was more mass and more progressive there. Perhaps, among other things, because in Belarus there was already an autocracy, and in Russia they were still playing a little pluralism, and anarchists at that time did not get any attention from the special services. In Ukraine, it was a different situation, a third. But there was a feeling that we are like that: we learn a little from the Russians, we read Russian resources instead of making our own. We often choose to speak in Russian in our texts, in this podcast among others, in order to reach a larger audience, because the Belarusian audience is quite narrow, and so we have to grab somewhat wider.

And here I wonder, you came later in the movement, I still caught the common camps, which were Russian-Ukrainian-Belarusian. And at that time it sounded like unity, this dependence on the leaders of opinions was not reflected at all. It is now that I see clearly that this leader of opinions was in Russia. And I wonder how you see it. Is it possible to say that the Belarusian anarchist movement was as if in the shadow of the Russian one always? How has it influenced us? Is there a desire to get out from under this wing now?

M: As for the influence of Russian culture and Russian anarchism on us, I'll start with the anarchist movement, and then I'll talk about society as a whole. At the time when I joined the movement, I was more aware of the influence, because I was very much oriented toward Russian information resources that were run by anarchists. Now I pay less attention to it, but I think that this influence was present, and for me it can be explained very simply.

are shy to ask, but we need help regularly. Different kinds of help and, unfortunately, it doesn't look like it's going to end anytime soon.

I really wish we would stop needing it, but who, if not you, when, if not now? And, of course, we are very appreciative and very happy, discussing among ourselves that those helped so much, the others helped so much, who said what, it's all very noticeable now (and there is much more help in any case). There is much more solidarity than negative communications and disappointment. There's more either way. But especially when there's a war going on, in my mind there shouldn't be any anarchists at all, who are in favor of justice and share our values, who would treat us condescendingly, from the top down, and make fun of us. But unfortunately, people are people. People are different, but they are mostly express solidarity and are bunnies.

I'm preparing for the tour now, too, and I immediately think about the provocative questions I'll be asked. I concentrate on them more, but I go quietly, because I realize that most meeting will be pleasant, and it will take all the negativity in these hard times, I am absolutely sure of it.

War and the position of Belarusian anarchists

Last issue we talked with anarchists from Ukraine, and today I have a Belarusian anarchist Max as my guest, with whom we will discuss Belarus' participation in the war, the mood in Belarusian society, the reactions of the opposition and anarchists to the war, and what to do about the growing nationalist sentiments of Belarusians.

L: Hey, Max!

M: Hey!

L: I would like to start then with an abstract question. It is clear that you live outside of Belarus now; it may be difficult to understand exactly how Belarusian society reacted [to the war] without being in Minsk or inside Belarus now. But nevertheless, I think you have the opportunity to get some first-hand information by talking to people who live there. Also, you are quite active here in the diaspora, and this is also a part of Belarusian society. Maybe you would like to share what points of development or, on the contrary, what points of regression you have noticed in Belarusian society concerning the war.

M: Yes, indeed, I left relatively recently, so I still have a lot of connections within the country, and I also communicate closely with the Belarusians in the diaspora here. In addition, I follow what is going on in Belarusian society through the media, so as far as possible, I am aware of the moods. I would note two very important points. The first point is that at the time of the beginning of the war, repressions had been raging in Belarus for a year already.

That is why nationalism works very well on us: the closer a person is to the front, the more it works on him. Because under the influence of fear, when you see the enemy, the concept of nationalism works very well. One must realize that an emotional decision is not always the best decision, even more often than not, people acting on emotions can make mistakes. This does not mean, of course, that people who are removed from the context know better and can analyze everything better. We need to realize that if a war has been going on for a year, it is sometimes important to stop, sit down and think about where we are going and how we should react. Or if the war ends, we should not wait for the next war to start, but think about such situations too, write some books that will help anarchists in the future to respond to these challenges adequately and not under the influence of emotions.

L: Coming back to our discussion, you mentioned that you wanted to talk a little bit more about nationalism. I wanted to talk a little more about the tendencies that you didn't mention when you talked about the Belarusian society, although you mentioned that there is a growth of nationalism. But it seems to me that I myself and very many people for the first time in a long time began to feel the desire to separate from everything Russian. That we are not brothers after all – Belarus and Russia. That Russia is not a big brother of Belarus and we want to separate ourselves. Many Belarusians began to switch to their own language, showing with all their might that they had been speaking Russian for 30 years, and now they realized that they didn't want to be associated with it in any way. There's a lot of these feelings of guilt, shame, and also an unreflected realization that it's like you've been part of this empire your whole life and now you want to understand something about it. It's as if that tendency is hovering. And I'm wondering how characteristic you think it is or whether it's even appropriate to talk about it in the context of the anarchist movement, because it seems to me that any trend in society affects us as well. We are all products of this society, we grew up in Belarus,

them. But, unfortunately, such texts reflect only one side. Or rather, even many sides, because many groups write from very different positions. There is a very wide range, and every anarchist from France, for example, can choose some appeal or some analysis and rely on it.

I began to wonder if all these texts that we once read from anarchists, that remained written on paper, that reached us and were translated, if these texts are not what all the theorizing is now? That theorizing then may have also excluded some activists, anarchists of that time, in that war, who simply were not engaged in writing texts, not engaged in delivering messages to comrades, they were engaged in fighting here and now, there in the field.

M: I want to say something about the fact that people who are in safer environments have more opportunity to theorize. Yes, that's true, of course. Plus there's also the aspect that people from more prosperous areas, no matter whether within one city or within one country have more opportunity to theorize than those who are on the edge of survival and are constantly fighting for their lives, even in peaceful conditions. It is all the more valuable for us to know that most anarchist theorists of the past were at the same time practitioners. And these were people who did not say, for example, as in the case of Makhno: "Here I have waved my flag, and if I don't have the opportunity to wave my flag now, I must keep silent, or that I must go and urgently look for a place to wave my flag". These people realized that it was important to sit down and write down these experiences and that theory is exactly what prepares us for action in the future. It gives us some answers so that when we encounter a similar situation later, we are not lost, but have some templates for action, know how our predecessors reacted, know what options there may be. And it is important, because when faced with a critical situation, any situation, flood or war, it does not matter, a person is very much under the influence of emotions, and in this state he is very vulnerable, including for propaganda.

People were actively detained, imprisoned on any grounds, various public associations and organizations were liquidated, all kinds of initiatives, including ecological and cultural ones, not only those of purely political orientation, were crushed. The moment at which the Belarusian society found itself at the beginning of the war was the moment of total repression. Nevertheless, there were protests. There were protests during the referendum, which preceded the war….

L: It happened 3 days after it, but the preparations for it and the announcement of this referendum started before the war.

M: Yes, yes, yes, yes. I mean, they almost coincided in time. People who went to the referendum were protesting in queues. In Minsk, there was an attempt to organize and march. These were not very mass phenomena, but again, I attribute it to the fact that at that moment there was already a total atmosphere of fear in Belarus. Despite this, there were repeated cases of sabotage on the railroad, which were aimed at preventing the movement of Russian troops and ammunition through the territory of Belarus. Relay cabinets were burned and railroad-related sabotage was committed in general. Several people were detained, including one person, as far as I know, who was wounded during the detention. After that, the anti-war movement as such did not manifest itself within the country, except for the information environment. To this day there are still arrests and detentions of people for comments on social networks, for anti-war posts. It is very difficult to do anything in the public sphere, on the street, because of the continuing atmosphere of total terror of the population, total repression. Therefore, it is better to track the reaction of, let's say, the democratic part of Belarusian society by the actions of emigration. And this is the second point, which I would like to note, that the reaction to the war depends very much on political views. And it will be a little bit different for people who support Lukashenko, his regime, and for people who support conditionally democratic forces or some other opposition, which also opposes Lukashenko. Here, too, it is not necessary

to distinguish so categorically that democratic forces support the Ukrainian side of the conflict, and pro-Lukashenko forces support Russia exclusively. The thing is that for many years the Belarusian propaganda has been playing the pacifist card that Belarus is supposedly an island of stability, that the society should unite around the dictator, as long as there is no war, as long as we keep neutrality and do not interfere anywhere. And that's why even for people who supported the regime, it was like a thunderbolt. That is, people who did not participate in politics, who were neutral towards both sides, or people who supported Lukashenko, many of them are still against the war or at least have an anti-war opinion. They want the war to end. Some think that it should just end with some negotiations, maybe concessions from Ukraine, some are even more in favor of the fact that Ukraine should win and that this aggression was unjust.

As for emigration, at first there was an attempt on the part of Tikhanovskaya's office to organize an anti-war movement, a coalition. But the democratic forces were very sluggish to get involved in it, and as far as I know, everything was limited more to such information campaigns and diplomatic field. But on the part of various grassroots initiatives of the Belarusian diaspora, there are a lot of programs of support for Ukraine, humanitarian programs, as well as direct support of the front. People, for example, weave camouflage nets, collect soup rations, raise funds for the purchase of ammunition, weapons, etc., etc.

L: Was there any turn in the opposition, any attempt to sit on this topic and use it as such an point for development or consolidation around itself? In particular, was there such, perhaps somewhere a nationalist, somewhere a militaristic turn?

M: Yes, I think that such tendencies can be observed. I wouldn't say that these were some coordinated attempts, because after all, the war took Belarusians by surprise. And those initiatives, which Tikhanovskaya showed, found little support in society. However, one can also single out such an alternative tendency – people who

strengthen maybe the liberal state, play to its advantage in the long run, support some strikes with purely economic goals so that people can just survive. And with regard to various conflicts, including war, anarchists act according to the following logic: "there's no time to deal with it and we have to do it right now, we'll deal with it later."

The second extreme is people who are paralyzed by theorizing until they figure things out completely. But life is complex and diverse, it is constantly changing, it is very difficult to figure things out completely. People who are plagued by these moral dilemmas, who feel that at some points they are departing from anarchist ideals, so they choose non-participation. But in my opinion, non-participation is the most contrary to anarchist ideals.

To take part in some bourgeois Maidan or imperialist war, but with our own agenda, trying to gain the autonomy that we do not have at the moment, trying to transmit to people the values and ideals that we carry for the future. Under the conditions and with the resources we have. This is what anarchists can do and what they should do.

L: Actually theorizing is a privilege. You can't theorize when you're in a bomb shelter or when you're being shot at. Discourse is captured by those who have the time and resources to theorize. We have so many analyses of the war from different anarchists, but if we look at anarchist websites in Ukraine, we see that they haven't been updated in a year. If we look at the anarchist groups that are active in Ukraine now (first are those who are fighting, the others are those who support them), we don't see any analysis of the war in their social networks, we don't see any criticism of the Ukrainian state. And because there is no analysis from them, there is then from others.

I just see that very often people in the West are looking for information: "Let's find some text firsthand, translate it, ask something…". Often these texts are generated from the Russian side, also because people have the opportunity, time, and resources to write

a civil war. When we try to maximize the possibilities of war in order to gain autonomy in it and to gain some kind of separate power in it, to gain the possibility of being that third force for which we will not have to choose. Because this situation of choice confronted the anarchists very often, they had to constantly look back at their allies. We all remember very well the events of the Spanish Revolution and the events of the Makhnovist movement, when we had to make some dubious alliances with the authoritarian left, because the situation demanded it. But nevertheless, it helped to grow, to get stronger and, perhaps, later, to emerge as a separate force. Somewhere this did not happen, but the chances, in my opinion, were quite high.

And in my opinion, the positions of those anarchists who have now decided to side with Ukraine, to take part in the war, and the positions of those anarchists who say that anarchists need to act as a separate force, they are actually somewhat similar. Because participation in the war provides the knowledge, the skills, the resource that anarchists could use in the future to become the very force that we can't be at the moment. It's just an objective reality that now a group of a few dozen people can't seriously talk about being a separate force. It's just a reality that needs to be accepted, but it doesn't mean inaction.

And then there is another philosophical question, which I will also briefly try to touch upon: the two approaches to theory, which, as it seems to me, dominate among anarchists. Two extremes, which we should somehow try to reconcile.

I would call the first extreme "putting out the fire". Since anarchists are humanists, they value human lives, human freedoms very much. And when faced with injustice, when faced with loss of life, they want to plug the holes, they want to save as many people as possible here and now. Because of this, sometimes there is a contradiction between reality and the ideals that anarchists declare, because reality is more complex and somewhere in order to save people here and now, you have to support some reforms that will

went to fight in Ukraine, or Belarusians who were already there and went to the front or actively joined the support of the front. And among them there are quite a lot of Belarusian nationalists, including those with extreme right-wing views. And these are the people who are skeptical about Tikhanovskaya, skeptical about many other democratic politicians, but at the same time are determined to participate directly in this conflict on the side of Ukraine. Now they are trying to organize a separate autonomous center of power, despite the fact that, from the point of view of liberal democrats, they do not have any special legitimacy. That is, these people were not chosen by anyone, even within their structures. First of all, I am referring here to the Kalinovsky Regiment, but this is not the only paramilitary structure that fights on the side of Ukraine. Nobody elected these people, that is, it is very difficult to call them legitimate, understandable representatives, even from the point of view of liberal democracy. But they are now trying to create political structures, trying to get involved in the struggle for power. And among other things, the war, of course, has caused the growth of nationalist sentiments in all countries, because for people it is an understandable and standard response to imperial aggression. This applies to Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus. I would say that there are no differences here, everywhere I observe the same thing – the growth of nationalist sentiments. Including within the empire, within the Russian Federation, there is also a growth of nationalist sentiments. For some it may be a sublimation of their unenviable situation, when they found themselves inside the aggressor country, and for others it is simply the effect of imperial propaganda and the fact that they succumbed to it in such conditions.

L: You talked about the fact that there was some sabotage or some more selfless, radical actions, this is on the one hand. On the other hand, we see the formation of a power bloc, which says: "We are taking up arms, we are sacrificing ourselves for freedom, and we are focused on the liberation of Belarus further. As we have already realized, everyone puts his own meaning into the notion

of freedom. I can hardly imagine the birth of partisans in conditions where there was no 2020, no understanding that there was some kind of anti-regime position and struggle. And on the other hand, I see it as a devaluation of nonviolent resistance, which was very much praised and promoted by liberal structures throughout 2020. It was shown that we are capable of throwing off the dictatorship by simply showing how many of us there are, or by simply insisting that we don't want it anymore. And in fact, Belarusian anarchists faced opposition when they tried more radical resistance. On many levels it was unacceptable and perceived as a provocation. On the other hand, there was a feeling that very often people liked this riot-porn. People liked to watch videos of someone fighting back against the police, where the same protesters were being run over in cars by 12 some kind of outfitted cops. People liked to watch that, but there were very few people who were willing to do that or even consciously support it as a method of resistance. And now it feels like everything has been turned upside down. There's this forceful voice that says, "We're tired of listening to someone else's speeches for years, we're going to go and take what's ours." And it seems to me that a very large part of Belarusians took it as if this is another such riot-porn, which we are going to watch now. How some strong armed men and some women will come in and lead us to freedom. And on the one hand, this is really some kind of victory, such a triumph of radicalism, for which, in principle, anarchists should be grateful or welcome it, but on the other hand, this is such unreflected radicalism, or rather, the expectation that again some hard strong hand will free us.

M: Yes, I agree with you in many respects. I have a feeling that the Belarusian regime played into the hands of anarchists twice. The first time, when on the eve of the elections of the 20th year, when large-scale protests were obviously expected, practically all prominent political figures were arrested. And people who were already determined to go out to protest were forced to go out there without the coordination of authoritative leaders, as they had been

only then this tactic works. Roughly speaking, if at least one state keeps at least part of its army in the form of a hundred men, and all the others stay at home and refuse to resist, then with an army of a hundred men this state can rule the world. So it doesn't work and every flight has its limits. Especially, I think resistance is better than flight, and it's very strange to give up like that without being sure that the state will die from it. Just submit and let the empires grow, let the soldiers come in, pillage and subjugate?

The second position that dominated public discourse was that of the victory of the lesser evil. Sometimes it was said that the lesser evil is our state, because we live in it. It's a little bit of that kind of selfish position. Sometimes people tried to look, to compare which state is more democratic, whose victory is more preferable from the point of view that in the post-war world they would find themselves in a situation with a weaker state, with a more democratic state, where the socialist movement and the anarchist movement could spread their shoulders, feel more at ease. In my opinion, there is a problem with this situation, too. First of all, it is very difficult to compare states by the degree of democracy. Secondly, in my opinion, any state undergoes genesis, development, and literally at the snap of a finger in a year or two a democratic state can become a dictatorship, a national state can become an empire, etc. And this is a complex dilemma, and sometimes even impossible, as for example in the confrontation between the Third Reich and the USSR. These are two hegemons, two totalitarian states, two empires, freedom was not expected from either of them, but at the same time they were two machines that grinded territories, grinded people. And it was difficult to stay on the sidelines, to be indifferent in this situation, that is, it was necessary to defend oneself somehow, to protect one's life and the lives of one's relatives, and to think about how one could look for alternatives in this situation.

And the third position, which is also very difficult to call realistic, but in my opinion, ideologically it is more consistent – it is a fire on the headquarters, the outgrowth of the imperialist war into

How do you view this contradiction? There seems to be an antagonism between theory and reality. Is it a weakness of theory or is it more of a choice of, as you said, the lesser evil when we encounter it in reality? It's like we're stepping a little bit on the throat of our declarative beliefs and making a conscious decision to back away from them because in the future or in a general context it would contribute to the anarchist struggle. I.e. if, for example, the Russian state invades and takes over Ukraine, there will be no anarchist resistance there, we know that. Including in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. And if the invasion is repelled, or better yet defeated, we will see the possibility of some progress. Of course, along with us, nationalists and other radical movements that are now raising their heads will fight for the future. How can we feel about this, should we recognize our defeat theoretically, or is it just a really outdated theory?

M: I'm going to start a little bit farther back and talk about this from a philosophical point of view, and I'm going to start with an excursion into history. The first time anarchists faced the question of whether or not to participate in a war was during the First World War. At that time, in most European countries, anarchists and other socialists were discussing this issue. It was quite a broad public discussion. They were all inside the warring countries, they were all confronted with the fact that the war was clearly imperialist in character. It was very difficult to say that there was a victim state, and there was a complex moral dilemma of how people should act in this situation. And already then three basic approaches were formed, which, in my opinion, were later repeated during the Second World War, and they still dominate the agenda in one or another form, but approximately in these three variants.

The first option is radical pacifism, i.e. to run away, emigrate, not to participate, to avoid war in every possible way, because war is bad. It is hard to argue that war is bad. Indeed, it is. But there is a weakness in any theory that proposes some kind of boycott or nonparticipation that this boycott must be absolutely comprehensive,

accustomed to doing before during more than 20 years of dictatorship. And this led to the emergence of self-organization, the emergence of various grassroots initiatives. Simply because people had to invent this coordination from scratch, invent it without leaders, because new leaders didn't have time to form so quickly. And on top of that, people also saw that leaders were not necessary. Those leaders could stay behind bars, and the protest would continue.

The second time, when the Belarusian state, again, played into the hands of anarchists, was when there was a total cleansing of the political field, even from various formal structures, from old politicians, from indifferent political parties, from various formal organizations, which in fact did nothing anymore. At the same time, it completely cleared the field of legal activity, and all hope that one could do any rallies or mass events in Belarus with impunity, sign petitions with impunity, or be a formal member of a party was exhausted.

The only way out, which seemed logical here, was guerrilla warfare. Or, as the war obviously suggested, another possible option – some kind of training of paramilitary structures abroad. All this coincided very organically, overlapped with certain stages in the Belarusian protest, which is already fading away. It is only a pity that people very seldom compare these two tendencies of self-organization and radicalization of protest in their heads, very seldom make a connection between them. Because if they coincided, it would be in line with the anarchists' understanding of what protest should look like. Until 2020, there was an opposition policy in Belarus, but it was always connected with equating to some authoritative leaders and with the perception of any radical protest as a provocation.

L: Well, then, what was the position of the Belarusian anarchists on the war? Is it possible to say that there is some universal position or understanding of the war by Belarusian anarchists, or are there some differences, divergent opinions, and so on?

M: I would say that the positions differ in some places, in some nuances, perhaps. I may have my own view on this matter, which does not coincide a little with the position of my comrades. But I will start with the general points, in which, in my opinion, there is a coincidence. There is a coincidence in the interpretation of which side is the initiator of the war, the aggressor, that is, who started this mess, who is responsible for the beginning of the war…

L: And that's…?

M: And this is the Russian Federation with Putin at the helm. But there are divergences on how exactly to participate in the war. There are people who without hesitation, almost from the first days of the war, joined the resistance to the Russian invasion, they tried to organize autonomous armed detachments, and some Belarusians, as far as I know, joined them. When it did not work for a number of reasons (let other more competent people tell about it), they joined other structures in the army and continued the resistance already formally in the ranks of the armed forces of Ukraine. Another part of people focused on supporting those who are in Ukraine, on supporting, first of all, anarchist comrades, on supporting the peaceful population, including patching some humanitarian holes. And a part of people advocated that it is worthwhile to participate in the war only as an autonomous formation, as an autonomous unit, and that participation in the Ukrainian armed forces is inadmissible for anarchists.

L: What is the analysis of this war? Is it a geopolitical redistribution of some sort or some kind of imperial takeover? Perhaps it's NATO provoking Russia to put itself on the defensive? How do Belarusian anarchists see it?

M: The position that I have heard from my comrades is that the Russian Federation is the imperial hegemon in this region. And since this is clearly a war that was initiated by Russia, like the more localized conflict in 2014 before that, which was also provoked by Russia, we should see this war as an imperial invasion. And we need to confront this greater evil, which brings with it a greater

humanitarian catastrophe for the population in these territories, which brings with it a totalitarian regime, which plans political clean ups and mass repression, as confirmed by the behavior of Russian soldiers in the territories they captured. And that is why it is necessary to resist the Russian invasion, to resist also in order to weaken Russia and help liberate other regions, including inside Russia itself, including Belarus, since Lukashenko obviously feeds off the existence of the regime in the Kremlin.

L: We have said that in Ukraine the comrades have decided to basically resist through either armed struggle or by supporting those who have decided to fight. At the same time we see that in anarchist theory there is a rather strong argument that is connected with the criticism of violence or the monopoly on violence, the criticism that in general any war is the use of the working class in its own interests in order to conquer other people's territories, which in principle the working class does not need. That is, it is not the interest of the working class to conquer anyone and kill anyone. There are no dividends for the working class. And so it is a logical enough argument that it is necessary not to participate in this war as much as possible, that is, to desert, to refuse, to sabotage any actions that are connected with it. But we are faced with the fact that if we look through the eyes of Russian anarchists, this is exactly what they are doing now. That is, in Russian anarchist groups, there is a focus on criticizing the army, on criticizing people answering mobilization calls, supporting anti-war prisoners, or directly sabotaging military action. And this is probably the most logical action that people who are inside the aggressor state can do.

But in practice we saw that when you are a defensive party, you can either really remain an "anarchist with pure views and beliefs" and leave your home, losing contact with your relatives, but remain an "anarchist". Or you could fight for the freedoms you had in that state or just for your life, for your right to stay where you lived, where there are some social ties around you, and so on.

Lera Khotina
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5 April 2024

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L: I know there seems to still be some sort of collective that repairs or rebuilds cars that can then be painted and sent to the front.

A: Yes, yes, there is a group called Tactical Aid – they prepare vehicles that can be transferred to comrades on the front line and they have done quite a lot. They continue to work, although maybe it’s not so visible now – before there was more information on social networks, more people were interested, asking what’s going on, how to help and so on. And now there is no such thing anymore…

There are people who decided to do it, and they’re doing it. And it’s cool.

There are Anarchist Black Cross groups in the south. When the invasion started, they were very active in helping and they had a lot of contacts in Ukraine and in the West. They helped people bring stuff and organized contacts too and they’re kind of still doing that. So there are a couple of groups. There are also groups that just from time to time collect some transports that they send to comrades. Only it’s not like in the beginning – when practically everybody was just talking about it and it was the main thing to do. It seems to me that in the beginning there was not much time to reflect on what was happening. There was a feeling of what had to be done. It was seen that Ukraine was resisting Russian imperialism and that there were comrades, there were anarchists, anti-fascists who decided to go and fight imperialism. And the natural reaction was to support these people and their decision.

L: Look, it turns out that in order to show any kind of solidarity at all, you have to see to whom this solidarity is directed. It is very common to see, for example, queers fighting in the war, receiving help from queers in Germany. Feminists do their own things and we realize that when we don’t know who we can contact and who we can help, it turns out that there is nowhere to send support. Or you have to find a group of people that you recognize as vulnerable. For example, No Borders was a collective that focused, among

other things, on those who were not being helped by the bulk of mainstream volunteer organizations, in this case non-white people.

I am from Belarus, I had the feeling all the time that there was some kind of joint movement in the post-Soviet space and we call the three countries in this case Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. We often had common contacts, even personal ones: some kind of trips, joint political camps, forums and so on. Were such contacts established between the anarchists of Ukraine and Poland, and to what extent were Polish anarchists in general oriented towards turning around and communicating to the East? Or was it still dominated by a general Western centrist sentiment – we pay more attention to places where there is more literature coming out, more activists. Do we look at what's happening in the U.S., read in English, and pay more attention than to what's happening in Kazakhstan, for example?

I'm constantly trying to find some parallels in my podcasts. For example, we explored all sorts of colonialist tendencies of Western anarchists, who think they know better how Ukrainians should fight and how Ukrainian anarchists should act. We talked a little bit about imperialism, which Russian anarchists may have unreflected, among other things. And here I wonder, given the former history of Poland, in which it was the center of influence on Belarus, Ukraine called the Cresses there. For the Kingdom of Poland, these were always some kind of subordinate territories, to the extent that this perception was reproduced in the Polish anarchist movement.

A: Difficult questions, I guess. Well, it's worth saying what stereotypes there are in Poland. And they affect me and others regardless of the fact that we are anarchists. In Polish, everyone from the east, i.e. from the three countries you mentioned, they are stereotypically called Russians. I.e. if in Polish if someone is called Russian, it's a rather offensive word. It's correct to say Russian, but everyone is called that, not caring about their origin – Belarusian, Ukrainian, Russian – all Russians. And people did not

really understand the difference in language: if someone speaks Ukrainian or Russian, people may not hear the difference. And as far as I remember from my childhood everyone was called Russian. In recent years, when they opened visa-free travel for Ukraine a lot of people started coming to Poland, there was a feeling that now it is much more offensive to call someone "Ukrainian" than "Russian". And many people didn't realize what kind of people they were meeting. It could be a person from Belarus or Russia, but everyone was Ukrainian, because Ukrainians were the most numerous at that moment. And I think that this affects anarchists as well, because often you can control your actions, but you can have these thoughts in your head.

As for Belarus, I heard from older people that there used to be good connections, for example Bialystok-Grodno. People traveled to each other all the time. But this changed when the border appeared, which you can't cross without a visa. It became quite a big problem and it affected, among other things, relations between people. About Ukraine on the one hand visas are not necessary, but on the other hand we live in the Schengen zone and people do not have a passport: in the EU you can easily travel with an ID card, but to go to Ukraine you need to make a passport for 200 PLN and maybe you will not need it at all in the future. Last year (2022) I noticed that some activists around me, for example, did not know that you need a passport to go to Ukraine and found out about it at the border, even though it is a neighboring country. And it's rare that anyone has ever been to Ukraine at all. But let's take Germany, they have been to Berlin a hundred times, because you just get on a bus, it takes, I don't know, 7 hours and you are there with your ID. And the fact that in Berlin you can communicate freely in English. For most activists, if they learn a language, it's probably English and it's a way to communicate with people in the West, that is, with other anarchists, and to go there and keep in contact. And, for example, to read what is happening in other countries (if they also publish something in English). I think Polish activists often ad-

mire the level of organization of activists in Germany and the fact that they have so many things going on and there are so many of them, and, for example, all these environmental blockades… I know that a lot of people quite often went and are going to participate in these events, but this is some good interesting experience that can be used in Poland. And it's something that can be really done and you can do it, again, without a border, you just go and make arrangements with people in English and do something together with them. And it seems to me that all of this somehow leads to more contacts with the West.

L: Given what you said, were there any contacts? Conditionally speaking, Polish anarchists found Solidarity Collectives, even though they don't read Russian or Ukrainian?

A: No, well, you can't say that there were no contacts at all, either, because there were contacts. There are people who know Russian or Ukrainian and they are from the movement and they can communicate and maintain various contacts with their comrades. So there were contacts. Plus, I think the situation in Belarus also influenced, that is, after 2020 a lot of anarchists and activists moved from Belarus, including Poland, and if people didn't know them before, they were able to get acquainted. Well, you don't want to, but contacts appear and they influence the views. And it is clear that Belarusian anarchists had connections with Ukrainian anarchists.

There are also anarchists, at least one of them told me directly that, for example, who think that there was no movement there, but then he started to help, in a collective, and they got in touch with different groups in Ukraine and it turned out that, yes, there are normal comrades with whom you can cooperate and that there is a movement in Ukraine and that it is possible to maintain contacts and to reach an agreement. There are people who speak English. Some people from the Polish movement had contacts, but just not at the same level as now.

L: I understand that in general, as you say, it's much easier to get a conventional job in German contexts, because Germans print

some calls in English. You can come to them and plus they kind of act as such an incubator for new activists. You can come to learn and it's kind of a no-brainer. Because when we look at the East, they also learn from the West, yes, and it turns out that if you need to interact in the East, you rather learn or raise the movement, develop it, than learn from others, where everything is already developed. And it's quite simple.

But on the other hand I understand that it's the lack of such very close ties and generally knowledge of each other. I think that if I ask a Ukrainian comrade, not many will name Polish anarchist groups that they know, that they cooperate with. And this is a mutual problem: Ukrainian comrades could also be interested in getting in touch and trying to do something together. And the impression is that they also jumped you and went straight to the Germans, the French, and so on. Where you can learn faster. This is just my reflection on how solidarity works: contrary to the talk about centralization at the state level (a somewhat polar world with one center in Western Europe), we often reproduce this centralization when we jump to where everything is in abundance, instead of looking around and starting to work with our neighbors and develop locally.

Speaking about Western comrades and about Western Europe, I have often encountered this opinion, reading, among other things, various statements from federations and various anarchists from France, for example, that everyone is against war. War is bad. But at the same time we are all in favor of international solidarity. We are for peace. We declare support for all workers, but it's not clear in what way it is expressed, except in declarations. When you talk to foreigners, you often hear that there is a strong NATO influence in their sphere. You hear about the years-long struggle against what NATO has done and is doing on other continents, which in turn is not particularly visible in Europe. About increased defense spending, about militarism, Germany's arms sales and all that. And this struggle looks logical. Not that I want to say that people should

forget about this struggle, because now it is important to defeat Putin, but I also live in Poland now, which is a NATO member. And I sometimes read texts from Polish anarchists. And in the Polish media you often hear, including from the authorities, that there is a need for more American, more Americanism, more NATO. Europe is already obsolete, it is weak and we will not survive without our big brother Americans. That is, the discourse of a big brother who will help – this discourse is strongly developed and present in society itself.

On the other hand, I haven't seen, or maybe even missed, any critical texts on this NATO policy in Poland. And here I have a question – is this such a quiet consensus that anarchists, following the society, accept: that there is a threat from another enemy, another world center that oppressed us, and NATO and America did not oppress us much, including in the historical context, and we can turn a blind eye to it and do what we do, or is there some way, I don't know, to balance, that is, to find some point where we could fight both at the same time, instead of choosing a side – what circumstances force us to do, so to speak. What do you know about that?

A: Yes, I think there is such a problem that there is no adequate criticism from anarchists about NATO in Poland. Maybe I'm missing something too, but it seems to me that it's missing and that maybe it's missing because of this situation. I mean, as you say, that there is such a silent consensus… But there is also this theme that the movement somehow reflects what society thinks and some tendencies of this society. I read some foreign blogs, for example, French ones, where you can really see that people see this war as if it were NATO against Russia: if some news appears and there seems to be no background in it, but then you look at the comments and see that people joke about Ukrainian soldiers and that NATO decides everything. So there is no such thing here. Nobody here thinks that it is NATO that is fighting and I have big doubts about

front line is now, it will be an unambiguous Russian victory, and if Mariupol remains part of Russia, it will also be a victory. Putin will be in power until he dies, and there will be more of the same after Putin. This will be interpreted as a victory, and this is a very bleak future, not only in Russia, but in general in the whole world. So we have no other chance but to repel this attack. And in this, unfortunately, anarchists can do very little, because military affairs are not the affairs of anarchists, we are not specialists in this, and anarchist methods and self-organization are not designed for modern warfare. I know that Ukrainian anarchists and anti-fascists are trying to participate in these processes, but it is unlikely that they will be any strong, decisive cases, but, in principle, they have no other options anyway. In Russia, it seems to me, there are quite a lot of prospects now, and in a sense, since the scale of direct action there is greater than ever before, a lot of people there are engaged in direct action, unfortunately, not always competently, a lot of people have been jailed. But I see that unprecedented processes are taking place in Russian society now, and anarchists also have a contribution to make there. But, of course, the price will be higher – I think that many people will be jailed, many people will be jailed for nothing at all, many lives will be broken, but, nevertheless, there are some prospects that are quite different than they were, say, 15 years ago. That is, on the one hand, everything will be very bad, but on the other hand, there are some chances to develop somewhere. I've never been an optimist, and I don't think optimism is necessary to do something. The personal desire to do something should come from some other grounds than the hope that there will be some quick and easy victories.

L: Yes, you can see this situation as a window of opportunity, because it is really unprecedented, and this window of opportunity, unfortunately, is open to many: to us, to the regime, and to any other groups that have an interest in one outcome of the war or another.

whether NATO will step in for Poland and there were enough cases when the West didn't really help Poland when the war started.

L: That is, there is not just no fear that someone will swallow up Poland, but there is no hope that someone will fight for that piece of land.

A: The feeling is that they will do everything possible to avoid a world war, so that the conflict does not touch the West. Poland in this case is not the West. It starts most likely with Germany. And our perspectives here are clear – Ukraine is at war and Ukrainian society is at war. Yes, they receive weapons, equipment, gear and so on from different countries, including NATO countries, but people are fighting – this is some kind of basis and if there were no these people, nothing would happen. I.e. Ukrainian society is fighting (and maybe some foreigners who also join in, risk their lives and fight).

There's also this theme that the closer something happens, the more real you feel it. More information that maybe some media in France, for example, don't translate. And it's clear that people don't read super much, they read short notes. Yes, maybe they will read a little more about hot topics, but in the end they still get some short notes and if they hear NATO, NATO, NATO all the time, that is how they perceive what is happening, and if they have no contacts with people, it is even more difficult to understand it. Similarly, it is difficult to understand the war in other places in the world.

I don't know, it seems to me that in our situation it would probably be good for us to discuss a lot of things. To discuss different aspects related to our state, how it reacts in these situations and to think about what kind of criticism is appropriate from our perspective. Because, for example, what I said about people supporting refugees as volunteers and humanitarian aid, and this is still true in many ways: there are just fewer people, but it's just kind of a grassroots society doing it. And, for example, in the beginning it was very easy to travel across the border and there were no, I don't know, restrictions and so on, and eventually the state came to the

border. They introduced restrictions and kind of made life difficult for people who were just helping, bringing all sorts of equipment and so on. And honestly, for example, it's harder to carry gear too. It may also be important that those people who travel to Ukraine and take aid there, Polish services are interested in them, and as it turns out, the state imposes some restrictions and probably some repression just a little bit at a time.

Well, so it's also something that some people know it's happening and some people don't know it's happening. At the same time, it's a situation where you can use the "hot topic" that people focus on and some laws are introduced in Poland that give more power to the police and so on. And this also goes more unnoticed because there are other important topics. There are many points, apart from criticizing NATO, where you need some adequate criticism about what the state is doing. But it seems to me that this is not something that is lacking just to criticize this particular situation now. Before that, too, there was, I think, not enough discussion of all sorts in the anarchist movement, there was more conflict and all sorts of problems. And things are complicated. So it may surprise me a lot that there is a lack of some kind of adequate discussion on this topic.

L: Is there maybe something else you wanted to say that I didn't ask or you think it's important to note in the context of the war, Poland, Ukraine?

A: I would only add that I myself have had some attitude towards the war changed recently. And at the very beginning I was focused on the fact that the most important thing is to help comrades in Ukraine who are either on the front line, or preparing for it, or doing something else. And I still agree with that and I still think it's important to support comrades. That's a priority. But on the other hand I have an opinion that I see the whole Ukrainian society as a society fighting imperialism. And for me it is important to support this struggle in general by any means. And in addition

do some actions and events from time to time, but many of them are constantly busy solving some everyday problems, because here you have to learn the language to somehow get into the labor market and so on, and this is not a matter of one or two years. But I hope that migrants will also show themselves more in time.

L: In your opinion, what is the most urgent thing for anarchists to do now in order to bring the end of the war closer? It is clear that anarchists cannot stop the war, but what actions are most relevant and effective now?

A: I don't think there is any super method that can help Ukrainian anarchists in any global way. It seems to me that they have already defined everything for themselves, and they have a rather simple and unambiguous action – to win the war. Personally, I have decided that I will primarily deal with the Russian issue, support for Russian anti-war prisoners, since very few people here deal with this topic, it is very little known. There are a lot of initiatives here: left-wing, right-wing, centrist, and apolitical initiatives that send humanitarian or military aid to Ukraine, but almost no one deals with Russian anti-war movements. This movement is, of course, much smaller than, say, Ukrainian territorial defense, but nevertheless Russia is a nuclear power. Ukraine, of course, can win with the help of another country, but only Russians can change the power in Russia. So even if Ukraine wins, the problem with Putin remains. So I will focus on Russian politics, because Russian society is much more familiar to me than Ukrainian society.

There are two tasks – in a sense to stop the Russian attack, to defend, Ukrainian self-defense is the first task. The second task is to break the Putin regime. They are, of course, linked. Without a relative victory for Ukraine, the Putin regime cannot be broken. So I have a defeatist position – Russia must be defeated in the war. And what exactly it will be – this is a more complicated question, where the front line should be in such a situation – this is a more complicated question. Maybe we can somehow talk about this separately. It is clear that, for example, if the ceasefire is held where the

no one from Russia could come either, because it was too risky. There were also several events in support of prisoners, trying to support Russian anti-war activists. There were several actions on the anniversary of the war, one of them was a march organized by Finnish anti-militarists, we went there. Anarchists went there with a banner "Burn the Putinists" in support of anti-war direct action in Russia. Some old pacifists criticized this, saying that we should be for peace, not for some kind of sabotage or violence.

But there weren't any particular problems anymore, and even the most staunch pacifists here usually realize that things don't always go without violence.

Now we will try to promote a campaign against Yandex, for sanctions and so on, but this is still at the initial stage. I should also say that the anarchist movement in Finland is not very strong, at best only a couple dozen people. And despite the fact that I and a few other people have always been closely involved in Russian issues, most anarchists are not engaged in it, because there is a language barrier, very few people understand Russian, very few people studied Russian in schools here. And many people have always been afraid to go there, that is, many anarchists were in St. Petersburg, in Moscow, but most of them didn't want to go there. There is some kind of psychological barrier, maybe subconscious anti-Russian sentiment. Well, in a way, of course, it's more interesting to go to Berlin and party there at some huge squat or rave than to go to Moscow and get attacked by nazis there. Everyone, of course, has their own fun. I had my own fun when I decided to live in Moscow, it was more interesting for me personally. But others may have some other interests and priorities. And after a year, most anarchists have returned to their former occupations and engaged, for example, in Kurdish topics, against local nazis and so on, and are already less occupied with Ukrainian topics or Russian ones. Some part, of course, still continues to be involved in Russian issues, and will continue to do so. There is also a growing community of Russian refugee anarchists and anti-fascists here, they also

to supporting my comrades, I believe that it is necessary to support the Ukrainian community, which is fighting imperialism.

War and pacifism in Germany

We have already talked to comrades from the post-Soviet space and from Poland, and today we move further West. Sasha is an anarchist from Belarus who has been living in Germany for a long time, and today he will help us understand the specifics of the German movement's response to the war, and we will think together about how to bring voices from the second world to Western activists.

L: How did German society, the German movement, German comrades react to the war? How did that change over the course of the year? And in general, it's the anniversary of the full-scale invasion – does the war still sound on the agenda of German comrades? And how do German comrades differ in terms of discourse and analysis from people who experienced the war directly?

Sasha: We were involved with comrades in raising money, buying supplies for the war, organizing solidarity actions, information events. We organized presentations, etc. In addition to mobilizing resources, we also did information work so that people understood what was going on. The work is huge, because the issue of disinformation in German society on the part of the Russian state is huge. For many years, Russian propaganda has been affecting German society by saying that there are fascists in Ukraine, that the 2014 Maidan was a fascist coup. This discourse is not only present in the broad liberal milieu, it is very much rooted in the anti-fascist circles, in the anarchist movement. Until February 24, 2022, many people believed that there was a fascist dictatorship in Ukraine, and that people in Donbass were fighting against this fascist dictatorship. And when Russian troops started marching from the north of Ukraine, from Crimea, it reinforced this propaganda that had ex-

funny because in Finland, in principle, they always think that we are not Eastern Europe at all, but more like Nordic countries, like Swedes or Danes. Personally, I always thought it was nonsense, because in mentality Finns are much closer to Estonians and Slavs than to Swedes. But now, for the first time in general, Finland has become even more like Estonia, the Baltics or Poland in this respect. Here, as we have already discussed, pro-Russian forces are quite marginal, but there is almost no neutral position that NATO is to blame, and even less among anarchists. Of course, there are a couple of Trotskyists, some Marxists, but they are not publicized anywhere. Recently, there have even been a few Maoist groups, but they are all just very small movements, I don't really follow them.

But what, in fact, were the anarchists doing last spring? The anarchists were very busy with this problem. The first thing we did was actions against Fennovoima. This was a Finnish nuclear reactor project that was to be built by Rosatom. But there were big problems there right away – the project had already existed for 9 years, but they had not even managed to submit an application with technical specifications during these years. So, of course, the project was already not very good, and it is likely to close without us. But we nevertheless made an action to remind us once again that we can't allow this kind of fuckery. Anarchists also did actions against local Yandex. Yandex.Taxi exists in Finland, they also have a big data center, but unfortunately we haven't managed to put an end to it yet. We also translated a lot of texts by Russian and Ukrainian anarchists. They were translated from English, as very few people here speak Russian and Ukrainian. We also supported Ukrainian anarchists and anti-fascists, the Resistance Committee, Solidarity Collectives, some other Ukrainian initiatives. We also supported Russian anti-war initiatives, including the Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists. In January we once again held the festival "Ded Moroz vs. Putin". We have been organizing it since 2014, but there was a break during the covid, as the borders were closed and no one could come. But this time in January

It has always been so, there is nothing new in this either. There will probably be some neoliberal measures and we will have to organize protests. The last time this happened was 8 years ago, when there was a right-wing government.

In principle, I don't see any strong changes. The general trend in society is that everything is moving towards individualism, nobody wants to pay taxes and you're on your own, everything is moving away from this Nordic model and towards the US, but on the other hand, personally I expected this already 25 years ago, but so far our society is not like in the US, not even close. I mean, I don't see the victory of the right as some kind of horror. All these parties are not that much different from each other, but of course the need to engage in a social movement is there. But also, I wouldn't say the left-wing government was somehow perfect, they generally shit on the Sami, the northern, minority people we have. They still couldn't give them some basic rights, we had big problems with mines, with animal rights, there were almost no restrictions on forest use at all, Finnish ecological diversity has gone down a lot in recent years. So, there were big problems with the previous government too.

L: How did the anarchist movement in general, maybe groups you know or are involved in, react to the war? What positions have they formed? Who do they support in this war or have they decided to self-deprecate, like many people in France, in Italy and Spain who say, no war but class war, we don't support anyone, Zelenskyy and Putin are the same, or NATO and Russia are the same?

A: There is no such position among anarchists here at all. There are a few, rather marginal Trotskyists who have taken approximately this position. They, too, have been telling me since March of last year that a nuclear war is about to start, but so far there has been no nuclear war. That is, there are no such problems here at all, not only for the anarchists, but also for the Party of the Left, as in Southern Europe, because, of course, there is some fear in society, but there is also some better understanding of the situation that we have now in Ukraine, Poland, and so on. And in a way it's

isted for so long. And understandably, the situation did not become easier for the German leftist movement and the German anarchist movement to understand, but paradoxically, very many people responded to this critical moment adequately. People began to listen to what the comrades were saying. And started, for example, organizing solidarity gatherings, organizing minimal infrastructure for comrades who are directly in Ukraine, etc. On the one hand, there was quite a long period of a completely different world that existed in this leftist milieu, which did not fit the reality in any way. And suddenly – bang! – it turned into a real understanding of what is happening in Ukraine. I am not saying that it was millions of German anarchists (who are not here). These were individual groups of anarchists who began to realize what had to be done.

It is clear that in parallel to this there is a broader leftist environment in which everything is the same. A year later, after Bucha, after Mariupol, after all these horrors, for them it is still a war between NATO and Russia, and the Ukrainian people are not perceived politically in any way. But there is a part of the leftist movement that is adequate, with which it is possible to work, with which it is possible to discuss something, and with this part we began to work from the beginning and continue to work. And those people who formed a position on the first day of the full-scale invasion, and they have been marching through the whole organizational structure with this position for the last year, roughly speaking – they have remained, these people are here, these people continue to insist that anarchists must lay down their arms and stop fighting for capitalism, etc.

The less people are connected to someone in Ukraine, to what is happening in Ukraine, to what is happening in general in Eastern Europe, the stronger this narrative is. That is, for people who are distanced from the reality of the Russian empire that existed for hundreds of years in Eastern Europe, for them, understanding that Russia is a threat to the freedoms and independence of the peoples who live on the territory politically controlled by Russia

is not an important point. For them it is more important to talk about NATO, to talk about Western imperialism, about Western capitalism, specifically neoliberal capitalism. And this information war continues a year after the start of the full-scale invasion, and it will continue as long as the war goes on. It is a disinformation campaign, including the one financed by the Russian state, aimed not only at leftists or anarchists. It is directed at all sectors of society. If we're talking about Germany, it ranges from the superconservative Alternative for Germany to the leftist parties that are Stalinists, Leninists, and other bullshit. This issue is going on as a whole process. And we've seen that the anarchist movement, even though it says we need critical thinking, it's not immune to misinformation. People eat shit from Russia Today or RedFish or some other bullshit and continue to do nothing. Either they call to lay down arms, run away, or embrace the Russian world.

L: I think it's a fairly human trait to look for confirmation of one's own already formed position in an anarchist agenda. Usually it's an anti-war, anti-militarist belief, support for deserters and things like that. And when something like what you read in theory begins, the first reaction is to react with these postulates, so dogmatic. And maybe that's why what is often observed in the West, further away from the borders of Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, is that people are looking for a source of information that will confirm what they think.

There are many opinions and everyone has something to back them up with. I'm not criticizing it, I think it's cool. In anarchism, there should be a polarity of opinions and the possibility of discussion, criticism, and challenge. And on the other hand, it seemed to me that the general leftist German milieu was quick to stick on some texts. I don't really agree that people watch Russia Today, although you probably know better. I have a feeling that people are looking for information, but they find it – where? They find it on the website of some CRAS-MAT (Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists – the Russian section of the International

not on the election agenda, as there is no disagreement on this issue. Here, the left-wing party is in favor of supporting Ukraine, and so are the right-wing populists, as I said.

The only thing is that right-wing populists have tried to argue that the rise in oil, gas, and electricity prices is not due to war, but that it is the fault of green taxes and green measures against climate change and so on. Which, of course, is nonsense. But a lot of people are still willing to accept that information. The populists also said that inflation is also just bad economic policy of the government.

And it certainly played some role, but there is no disagreement in the general line of support for Ukraine. Regarding militarization, Finland could not be militarized any further. Of course, there were some episodes, for example, when Sanna Marin said that after Finland gives up its old fighter jets, Hornets, it can give them to Ukraine, the right-wingers made a big fuss that you can't propose such a thing without a meeting with the army, with the president. But at the same time, they tried to present everything in such a way that they are not fundamentally against transferring the fighter jets to Ukraine, that they just think that the prime minister does not have such authority.

It was a pretty idiotic episode, but maybe the right-wing got some extra votes on it. In Finland, yes, there is always political fluctuation. Very rarely when the incumbent prime minister wins an election, almost always he loses. Our government almost always changes every four years and a new coalition comes to power. But actually the overall policy line doesn't change much. It's more likely now that there will be some budget-cutting measures: some benefit cuts. This is a right-wing idea. They want to cut all budget expenditures. In general, despite the fact that Finnland is left-wing in a sense: a lot of public services, quite high spending on social benefits, education, and so on, there has been a very paranoid attitude on public debt here for 150 years. Always the top priority is no debt, so you don't sit in debt, debts always have to be paid off. Some strange semi-religious Protestant approach that debt is a sin.

will be no courts. At worst, there will be some kind of fine, which the comrades will be able to pay immediately. That is, by and large, all these papers that were signed with Turkey had no effect in Finland. In Sweden, perhaps, there were more problems, and there is a large Kurdish diaspora there too, about 100 thousand people, but they took a slightly different position. In Sweden, the Kurds and the leftists were against NATO, there were big marches with PKK flags, with banners against NATO. In Finland, the Kurds preferred not to take such a position, because they did not want to go against public opinion.

L: What kind of bias is developing in politics after a year of war, or maybe not? I've talked to guys from France, from Greece, and they all note that right-wing sentiment is growing. Even within parties that were initially not particularly right-wing. You could say that now all centrist parties are becoming a bit more right-wing: they advocate militarization, military economy, limiting social security in favor of military budgets. As I understand you had an election the other day, maybe you can say something about the results of that election and how you generally assess what's going to happen next depending on what the results of that election were? Because it's the same people electing these people, like choosing who's going to represent them. Is there such a move to the right in society right now? Or has this problem bypassed Finland?

A: There were elections here, yes. A local party similar to the Christian Democrats and right-wing populists won, but the Social Democrats also got additional mandates compared to the last parliament. So it was not an unambiguously right-wing victory. The centrists, the Greens and the left lost strongly. Politics is moving to the right in a way, but still not very much. There, in total, I think, less than 20 deputies, that is, less than 10% change in the ratio in the parliament. But the next government, of course, could be much more right-wing. In the future, it may not be so, because the populists and the Conservatives have still quite big differences, for example, on the European Union and other issues. Here the war was

Association of Workers – Anarcho-Syndicalist International – editor's note), which translates everything into English in a good and popular way and talks about the position of their group, which, in principle, is not representative. But at the same time they make a long analytical text that can be reposted and translated everywhere. And people rush to support deserters, while there are deserters, for example, in Russia, but they are not in Ukraine. Accordingly, they rely as if on anti-war resistance: support of saboteurs on the railroad, support of anti-war prisoners, etc. And it's all super important, but I have the feeling that you're lurching to one side. I mean, you're kind of against the war, but at the same time you're a little choosing to completely turn a blind eye to the kind of activities that Ukrainian comrades are doing, because they don't fit this format of anti-war dogmatic struggle. How much does this frame, set from the beginning, affect the ability to attract money, to attract resources, to attract attention to the struggle of Ukrainian comrades?

S: It is natural to try to find something that is close to you, but the problem is that in Western Europe, particularly in Germany, people are very much disconnected from the rest of the world. The kind of life you have in Germany, the comfort, the economic stability – it is not inherent in the majority of the planet. So when there are some conflicts within society, within the former Soviet Union or in the Middle East, they try to fit this reality, where the conflict is happening, into the way they understand the world. And they understand this world, sitting in Germany, in terms of their political analysis. And in this case, Damier (Soviet and Russian historian, researcher of the international anarcho-syndicalist movement – editor's note) can write some text with his CRAS-MAT, and this text will go around to all the pacifists. Because he's a good man, a class fighter, sitting in a university. But the trick is that if he were the only person who reproduced it, it would be difficult for such a picture of the world to exist in objective reality.

Roughly speaking, you have formed an ideological postulate, which you try to tell everyone, but the rest of reality does not co-

incide with this ideological postulate. Then there is cognitive dissonance, and people fall away from these sectarian ideas. But the problem is that Damier is only a brick in the construction of this disinformation. And when Damier appears against the backdrop of the disinformation campaign in other resources, he fits normally into this reality. He does not stand as a lone tree in the desert, no, he exists in the context of leftist propaganda, close to Putin. Or even anarchist near-Putin, pro-Putin propaganda. It's all one thing on top of another, and as a result you have this reality where you're looking for defectors to stop this war, while the Ukrainians are an alien group of people who are getting in the way of ending the war. If they had picked up pitchforks and gone and killed Zelensky, then maybe the war would be over.

For these people, this reality exists: the war exists not because of the Russian ideology, the ideology of the Russian world, but because of the ruling circles of Ukraine and the ruling circles of Russia, which cannot agree with each other. It's important to note that the war in Ukraine has been going on for quite a long time, so the disinformation campaign has been going on for a long time, but it's not the only war that exists on the planet at the moment. If we look at the war in Syria, we see that many people also chose to sit on their golden throne and say, "In Syria, everyone who is fighting Assad is an Islamist and a fascist and we are not going to help them." And when the Syrian civil war started, there was even less support for Syrians then than there is for Ukrainians now. Very many people, including leftists, did not pay attention to Syria.

Now a lot of weapons are being supplied to Ukraine, and many leftists support this. There was talk about Syria, saying what is going on, no weapons should be given to the Syrians, and under no circumstances should German imperialism interfere in what the Syrian people are fighting for. This alternative reality for the leftist movement exists consistently. It's not something that periodically pops up, explodes, and you confront it. No, it's people forming some kind of reality that exists in books alone, as you rightly say,

The issue of Kurdish refugees in Finland had no effect at all. There was a list of people who were demanded to be expelled from Sweden, there was a list of people who were demanded from Finland. It had no effect on Finland at all: no one was arrested, no one was deported, the PKK was still collecting money, no accounts were frozen. Some documents were signed, but it had no effect, because here the judiciary is responsible for deportation issues, and it is somehow separate from the state. Of course, if there was a real crisis, the judiciary would not be independent. I was even a little surprised that it was. It's clear that cops and judges are not strongly anarchist, and they can do some fucked up shit like they did in the 70s when virtually all Soviet dissidents who escaped here were immediately extradited back. They didn't do that with the Kurds. It was a little worse in Sweden, they arrested Zinar Bozkurt in August but eventually released him in October. In December, they extradited one accused PKK member, Mahmud Tat. He requested asylum in 2015 and has not received it yet. So it's not quite clear what the circumstances were there. But even in Sweden, people who have already been granted asylum or even citizenship have not been extradited. In the summer and fall, we were very afraid that some kind of bullshit might start. We organized several actions, but in the end nothing like that happened.

Another thing is that some relative repression has started: there have been actions against Erdogan, actions where portraits of Erdogan were burned, there was an Erdogan doll a couple of weeks ago in front of the Turkish embassy. There were actions of anti-fascists, anarchists, leftists who demanded that Finland not make any concessions to Turkey, demanded support for Rojava, PKK. During the actions the organizers were arrested, they were accused of slander, despite the fact that in Finland you can only be charged under the article "slander" if the person who was slandered filed a complaint. So it was some kind of nonsense. There was some public outrage. In a way, of course, it's a restriction on freedom of speech. But I think that most likely now all the cases will be hushed up, and there

extradition already now? Or do you basically have no such refugees who were or are still conditionally members of the PKK? What does this mean for real people?

A: Regarding military expenditures, Finland's accession to NATO will not change much. There is, of course, the NATO membership fee, but it is not very big. Few people know, but Finland is a very militarized country, the military budget here has always been much higher than the minimum NATO requirements. We have a very large army by European standards, Finland has more guns than, for example, the UK. In my opinion, there is no country in Europe, except Russia, that has bigger artillery than Finland. There are tanks, recently bought almost the most modern fighter jets F-35, which will be delivered only by 2025 or 2026. There are 280 thousand people in the main body of the army, and almost one million in the reserve. That is the maximum army of Finland in wartime is half of the Russian army, approximately the same as in Ukraine. Finland is such a most militarized country in the world, except for Israel and North Korea. So NATO probably won't make Finland even more militarized. It will probably do the opposite, because we have allies now. Maybe a couple years after the war ends, if the war ends with nothing or with a Ukrainian victory, then politicians, on the contrary, will start to cut the military budget. There were very large military expenditures here because we needed an independent defense, meaning Finland had to be ready to fight Russia without the help of any other countries at least for a few months. So it remains to be seen whether joining NATO will increase military spending. On the other hand, military spending is certainly being raised a lot right now because Finland is sending quite a lot of weapons to Ukraine and the government wants to replace them. Maybe they will increase military power, but if there will be an increase in militarization or military budget, it will probably not so much because of NATO, but because of the war.

books from a hundred years ago. Many of them are relevant, but many of them are irrelevant – it doesn't make sense now to compare World War II or World War I with the war in Ukraine. The anarchist movement needs to realize this if it is to remain relevant. We need to take a step back and return to the reality that exists, not just in ancient folios or even in the books of today (but the books of Western academics); the reality that most workers, most of the very working class across the planet, face; a reality that is consistently ignored in the so-called first world, that they don't want to see in the hope that it will either go away or get better at some point. And the same reaction at the moment exists in part of the left anarchist movement in Germany: it's the hope that we're going to do our text-writing, our call-writing that we should stop supporting the Ukrainians and they should surrender, until the war is over.

You remained sitting on this throne of alternate reality, and you kept everything, and the world didn't change in any way for you. Whereas the whole world has changed. The world is constantly changing, and the traditional anarchist idea presupposes flexibility and understanding of what's going on in the world, not some kind of state bureaucratic ideology that for a hundred years has been saying that Lenin saved our revolution, blah, blah, blah, and other bullshit. As a result of the war in Ukraine, as a result of other crises, we see that the anarchist movement needs a shake-up. It needs to be transformed – otherwise it becomes less and less relevant to the common people.

L: There is this discourse: the denial of another reality or the unwillingness to face it. Do you see an opportunity to really influence this discourse and bring analysis from our post-Soviet space? Or will anarchists always be seen as uneducated people who still need to learn? This is also a bit of a colonialist view, because we have already understood everything here, and Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Russian comrades contradict us, which means that they have not understood something. Let's be polite to them, but at the same time, let's not let them get to our heads and our logic. Or do

you still think there is hope? Then what are the most effective ways to get the word out and challenge Western hegemony?

S: In any case, it is necessary to do it. Through information resources, through actions, to inform people. This is an important part of the anarchist movement, because anarchism is not just a couple hundred people in France or Germany, it is an international movement. It is a movement that has been in Hong Kong, in Minsk, in Kiev, and also in Syria. And very often we find that people really ignore non-first world anarchists from this perspective that they are, in their opinion, a bit backward people who haven't caught up with how anarchism works. And it's not just about colonialism. It has to do with racism, it has to do with "first-world" arrogance including towards Eastern Europe, towards the Slavs in general.

L: Maybe they took offense at Bakunin for taking the side of the former in the struggle of the Slavs against the Prussians?

S: Prejudice against non-first worlders exists in German society at all levels. It's not a right-wing ideology that says there is a first world and a remnant. You often see this kind of arrogance towards comrades from countries that are not perceived as economically strong among the educated German left, among educated German anarchists. Politics is very often layered on top of economics, and if you don't represent yourself economically in society, for example, you don't have power or political influence. This is a rather strange approach, which also needs to be changed by our actions. For example, the uprising in Belarus attracted quite a lot of attention from anarchists from all over the world, because anarchists played a big role in it, and direct participation by anarchists in social conflicts draws people's attention to them. Today you are a "nobody from Minsk" and tomorrow you are a revolutionary fighter, and then not only Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians listen to you, but the whole world listens to you. Ukrainian anarchists participation in the war in Ukraine also attracts attention. Obviously, there are always dogmatists, but I've seen that a lot of people have changed their perception of anarchists from Ukraine or Belarus –

nothing like that now, and we have no need to unite with Turkey. This is what concerns the position of the group.

And there is a third argument, which is more my personal opinion. Finland joining NATO will not change much. Since Finland is already part of the EU, and if Russia attacks Finland now, other EU members will side with Finland. And since most NATO members are EU members, they will also be involved in the conflict.

Joining NATO has more to do with identity than with any reality. They say that Finland was in some sense independent or separate from the Western bloc, that Finland was a neutral country – this is simply not true. The European Union now has no common military policy, no common military strategy, but nevertheless in fact it is almost a federal state, and that (unintelligible) also has no sense.

And that's also the reason why our group didn't campaign, we wrote a statement against NATO membership, but we didn't actively engage in propaganda against NATO, because it's more of an identity issue. Of course, the liberals who love the US, who have a complex that Finland is not a real western civilized state, until Finland joined NATO, they are of course now very happy, somewhere out there drinking with joy. That's the way it is.

L: You say that joining NATO is a symbolic step, but on the other hand, this step leads to some kind of action. You said that politicians have been interested in joining NATO for a long time, for the last 20 years, that they were somehow secretly in favor of it. I think it's logical because it's a huge amount of money, a militarized structure, militarized technology, it's one of the most profitable areas of capitalism right now. So it is logical that they will all be in favor, and someone else will put money in their pockets. But joining NATO is not just signing something and moving on. These are military expenditures, which are approved at the level of NATO, which it requires from everyone, I think, up to 2% of GDP. What will that actually mean for Finnish policy on Kurdish refugees? Will it mean anything at all? Are there any precedents for

In fact, this issue was hardly discussed at all before. Almost nobody was interested in it. Of course, there were lobbyists, there were some clubs, there were Atlanticist societies that worked to get Finland to join NATO. But that didn't seem a realistic prospect to anybody. And after the outbreak of the war, public opinion changed very much.

What do I personally think about it, what do anarchists think about it? Our group took a position against joining NATO. There were two main reasons for this. First, the probability that Russia would attack was not high from the beginning, and every day it is getting lower and lower, because the Russian army is getting weaker and weaker every day. With every day of war in Ukraine, the probability that there will be some kind of war here is getting lower and lower.

Secondly, it is clear that NATO is not a community of democratic countries. There are countries there that are as undemocratic as Russia, such as Turkey. Turkey has seized part of Syria, is carrying out ethnic cleansing, torturing people and destroying villages and towns. This is in no way fundamentally different from what Putin is doing. It's just on a slightly smaller scale. But the goals and ideas are virtually the same.

We have a large Kurdish diaspora here, about ten thousand people, most of them are Turkish Kurds who have been in conflict with the Erdogan regime and Turkey in general, and have been living here for decades.

But this is also some kind of campism, why should one choose between two imperialists? There is simply no reason for that. It is clear that if there was some kind of mortal threat, if Putin attacked, deported all the Finns to Siberia, then maybe there would be no alternatives but to choose any allies. Now this is happening in Rojava, they are in a position where they invited the American army, trying to establish relations with Assad because they have a more dangerous enemy in the form of ISIS. I mean, when there is a mortal danger, then of course that choice has to be made. But there is

a lot more listening, a lot more paying attention to what's going on there, and paying attention not to traditional books but to reality. Things change as we struggle, and this is an important part of political anarchist theory: our movement is only possible when we struggle. We are not Marxian-type academics who claim that in 100–150 years there will certainly be a free society. We insist that there will be no freedom without struggle, and we develop our theory through struggle.

L: In the paradigm of a bipolar world, where it's a war between NATO and Russia, and everyone else is not subjects but just territories and chips that are played by these two forces, it's assumed that the best thing an anarchist can do is to refuse to support either side. I think this is logical: people living in the West are indeed more influenced by NATO. The countries in which our comrades live are directly involved in NATO. Our Western comrades' tax money goes to weapons that Germany sells abroad, where it kills Syrian citizens and others. It is natural to realize who your enemy is on your territory. And it is absolutely logical that for a German or French, Putin or the Russian world may not be his direct enemy, but an abstract despot and tyrant. Fighting Putin presupposes an alliance with NATO, so we will not fight him. There is such a dichotomy: there is either an option to do nothing, or you need to take a side, not just declare it, and accept that we have our own struggle, it has its own coloring, you have another struggle, and in this struggle both of our enemies are clashing – states that represent a great power. And the question arises: how can we, as anarchists, without canceling some comrades, continue our struggle against our closest enemy? What steps could be taken to at least begin to think in this direction?

S: The issue of fighting militarism and fighting NATO for me very often comes up in places where people haven't done it before. Many groups that are now actively talking about the NATO-Russia war and counter-NATO in particular have not been involved in fighting NATO before. Moreover, they will not be fighting NATO

tomorrow. And, most likely, even today they are not engaged in it, and they use the declarative fight against NATO militarism to justify their own inaction. As for those who really fight against militarism, for example, in Germany, Poland or Italy, it is very often possible to find a common language with these people. You can discuss the question of militarization with them, and these people are often not as dogmatic as Vadim Damier and his followers. They understand how militarism works, what drives it, and how to fight it. For me, in this case, it is very important that this struggle against NATO does not close in on itself, ignoring Russian imperialism. Because the fight against militarism in Europe is now directly linked to the collapse of Russian imperialism, to the collapse of the very Russian world, which was actively used before February 24th and will be used as long as this military machine exists to build up its own military resources. This is a permanent threat that comes from crazy people in the Kremlin, who are ready to push buttons and bomb the entire planet.

For many, this danger justifies militarism. Even many on the left have the question, what will they do if Putin marches on Poland? This question may have already disappeared with the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, but until 2022 it existed. When I lived in Belarus, the daughter of militaristic Russia, I saw that Belarusian society was much more heavily militarized than German society: all these marches, all these tanks in the squares, all these cries that we can repeat… The militarization of Russian society and former colonies within the former Soviet Union is much stronger, much more aggressive than in Germany, France, or anywhere else. So if we want to influence what NATO is doing, to influence, for example, the German military budget, which has grown to unbelievable proportions in the last year, it is necessary to defeat Russia in this war. It is necessary to destroy huge empires that have huge amounts of resources, huge amounts of military equipment, and only then people in Poland, people in Lithuania can at least start saying that they don't need these tanks, they don't need this mili-

L: You said that earlier the society was rather against joining NATO, and you also said that there is some distrust towards the West. Was the reluctance to join NATO related to this distrust? Or were there some other reasons why Finns didn't want to be in NATO? Today Finland seems to have officially joined NATO. How do you assess this step yourself, how do you feel about the fact that Finland made concessions to Turkey, and how much are these concessions at all? Are they real or is it just some demagoguery and Erdogan just needed some written agreement from Sweden and Finland that they will do this in the future?

A: The main reason for NATO's unpopularity is the complete lack of trust that if it joined NATO, it would be able to help. Another reason is that they did not think it was necessary.

The public opinion was that there are no problems with Russia, we do not have any unresolved issues on the border or history, in principle there is quite favorable trade, relatively large tourism and so on. So, first of all, there are no problems, it's just unnecessary spending. Secondly, if we join NATO, no one can help us anyway, they always say that we have 1300 or 1100 kilometers common border with Russia, we have 5 million people, and Russia has 140 million people. No NATO will help us if some fucked-up situation starts. We have to fix everything so that there are no problems, so that there are no problems in sentiments, try to find a common language somehow. This line of behavior prevailed after World War II, for the last 80 years. After the outbreak of the war, fear began to prevail, and the funny thing is that the political elite has been actually in favor of NATO for a long time: the Social Democrats and the right-wing were actually in favor of NATO for the last twenty years, but they couldn't talk about it openly because the people were against it. Now they started to take a pro-NATO position, but only after the opinion polls were in favor of 70 or 80 percent. And now, on the contrary, they are competing to see who was first, who used to be in favor of NATO. Who was in favor of NATO in '95 is cooler than who was in favor of NATO in 2005.

therefore had to attack first? Such opinions are rather uncommon in Finland, right?

A: Well, this trend exists, like everywhere else. But here it may be even less than in Ukraine. Almost all other European countries have a left-wing party that has a kind of neutral position, maybe some minorities take pro-Putin positions or have a general pacifist position against military aid. But there is no such thing here. In many countries the right-wing populists have pro-Putin tendencies, but here the main right-wing populist party has very few such tendencies. It is funny that everyone accuses each other of Putinism, opponents of NATO are accused of being financed by Putin. Also those who are critical of the support of Ukrainian refugees, some right-wingers may be against refugees, but there are also very few of them. The main occupation is that everyone calls each other Putinists, but in fact there are almost no Putinists anywhere. There was a party from which the anti-vaccination denialists formed, they got less than 5% of the vote. In this party there was Johan Beckman, who often appeared on Channel One in Russia, he also ran for office and got a few hundred votes. So these are very marginal tendencies, it's almost impossible to intersect with them. There is a group of Russian migrants who tried to organize a May 9 action, formally just a commemorative one, like "grandfathers fought in the war" and so on. In principle, it is clear that this is actually a Putinist action. There was quite a strong reaction to them in the media and in society, and we haven't heard anything from them since then. There is a pro-Russian position, but it is very weak and it is virtually impossible to meet its bearers. There are quite a lot of Russian migrants here, about 100,000 people, it is clear that there is a minority of pro-Putin people among them, but they prefer not to declare their position, they do not advertise it anywhere, not because it is dangerous, but simply such a position is not perceived and, understandably, there may be problems with work and so on.

tary madness, that they want peace. But as long as there are imperial claims to power, it is not possible to change anything locally. And NATO, as we've seen, became much more relevant to people in Scandinavia after the war started. And for other regions too – everyone wants to go to NATO because NATO, at the very least, can potentially protect you from the crazy people in the Kremlin who might show up on your doorstep with nukes. If you answer the question "what to do?" – do congresses, if you are interested in militarism, organize a joint struggle with people who are fighting militarism in Ukraine, in Russia, in Germany, in France. But it is ridiculous to say that we will sit on the asphalt here against German militarism, while you put down your weapons in Ukraine and fight yourselves. This is, again, ignoring reality. I can't imagine that at this stage, when you have crazy fascists running around with swastikas, you're like: okay, I'm going to fight militarism, because the guys from Berlin told me that militarism is shit. If you want to consistently organize the struggle, then organize the struggle, and if you want to show how good you are, and someone else is bad – then here, this is the way out for you.

L: Has your assessment of international anarchist solidarity changed over the year?

S: You know, a brief emotional analysis might lead you to the conclusion that people don't understand what's going on at all, and nobody wants to help. But in the long term, we see that hundreds of thousands of euros have been donated to support only Ukrainian anarchists, and a crazy amount of money has been donated to support the people of Ukraine, which exceeds the budget of the Ukrainian state by fuck knows how many times. And it's not state support, it's ordinary people, from anarchists to just some Petya from the factory, who saw that and was like: "shit, it's necessary to support people, and donated"

International solidarity is not as fast as we would like it to be, but when you see it in action, you realize that it has a huge impact on the struggle and is a huge support for those who are strug-

gling on the ground. International solidarity works, international solidarity will work. It has always been and still is a huge part of the anarchist movement. Maybe not for everyone, but for many anarchists solidarity is important. And the fact that in this mobilization of international solidarity we are confronted with people who don't want to see reality, who need time to understand it, is not the first time. Going back to the books of a century ago: during the revolution in the Russian Empire, no one wanted to hear that the Bolsheviks had seized power and were building a new empire. It took quite some time to convince some leftists and anarchists that the Bolsheviks were not allies of the revolution.

Historically, we went through these periods a huge number of times when people need time to understand what is happening in another part of the world. It is understandable that when the Internet was created and anarchists came there, there was euphoria. We hoped that we had broken through the information blockade and now we would all listen to each other and understand each other. But it turned out to be a balagan, where not many people are listening. At the same time, I believe that in the end we will come to something positive, and anarchists have shown and will continue to show an example for the rest of the political spectrum in terms of international solidarity.

I wanted to say thank you to all those who are still paying attention to what is happening in Ukraine. Thank you to those comrades who are fighting in Ukraine now, who are organizing solidarity from Ukraine for people in Ukraine. Thank you to all those who are helping Ukrainian refugees, Belarus refugees, just refugees of war. These are fucking great people. And I think these fucking people often don't get as much attention as politicians do. So don't forget about these people. Next time you see one of these people, thank them and remind them that they are fucking awesome.

L: Really important words. I think it was quite interesting to dig so deeply. Thank you very much for the talk.

Finland has a special relationship with Russia. There is no other country that has such a history of relations with Russia. On the one hand, there is a deep fear and even resentment for past wars. It seems to me that Finns' relationship with Russia is in a way very vindictive. I lived in Russia for 12 years and it was very rare to meet some people who were still angry with the Germans, but in Finland it's not like that, there are quite strong anti-Russian sentiments that are hidden in a way. I know many Russians who have lived in Finland for five to ten years at a time, and after 10 years, after they have already fully mastered the Finnish language, they notice that Russians are not liked in Finland.

In general, Finland's attitude towards Russia is determined by three opposite aspects: firstly, there is fear; secondly, there is hope that by cooperating with Russia, one can somehow make very good money because it is a big country. There were periods in the 70s and early 80s when trade was very profitable and many people became rich. And there is a third aspect: there is a distrust of the West. In Finland, it is believed that Russia is scary, it is imperial, it is dangerous. But on the other hand, the West does not help us either, as it did not help us in the 30s. Finland was a member of the League of Nations, the main allies were Great Britain and France, but they did not help us in the end.

I.e. there are three opposite tendencies, in different periods some were stronger, some weaker. After the outbreak of war, fear began to dominate the other two. Many of the largest corporations withdrew their assets from Russia. Support for NATO increased, previously in Finland about 80% of the population was against NATO membership, a couple of months later it was already 80% in favor.

L: Would you say that you haven't met people in Finland who are on the side of Russia in this war? Or, for example, saying "not everything is so clear"? Or would say that Russia is a victim, as it is trying to sell itself now, a victim of a possible NATO attack? That Russia should have repelled a NATO attack in advance and

Why Finnish anarchists are against joining NATO?

Today my guest is Antti Rautiainen, an anarchist from Finland who lived in Russia for more than ten years and was expelled for his political activities. Antti will talk about the election results in Finland, what anarchists think about the country joining NATO and whether Finns are afraid of a Russian attack.

Antti: My name is Antti Rautiainen. I am an activist, an anarchist. I've been living in Helsinki for the last 11 years, and before that I lived in Moscow for 12 years and participated in the Autonomous Action movement there. Now I am a member of a local anarchist group. We have a working group called "Solidarity with Eastern Europe", within the framework of which we are involved in anti-war activities, among other things. I am also involved in various other projects that are related to local politics, trying to develop the anarchist movement in Finland.

L: How did the society of the country you live in, Finland, react directly to the war? It is clear that a year has already passed and perhaps this reaction has changed in some way, but maybe you can remember what the reaction was a year ago, and why do you think it was like this?

A: The reaction here was quite strong. Much stronger than, for example, during the war in Georgia in 2008 or during the seizure of Crimea and the war in Donbass in 2014. In general, society was quite shocked, for many months the war was the main issue on the agenda, and partly still is.

Why do the French love Putin?

L: Today I have as my guest Jan, an anarchist from France who is a bit more immersed in the topic of Eastern Europe than other activists, speaks and reads Russian and often acts as a conduit between Russian-speaking and French anarchists. Jan will discuss what makes the French support Putin and how the local anarchist movement reproduces the capitalist logic of solidarity.

Jan: Hi, my name is Jan, I live in France, and I've been involved in a collective that fights against police violence and militarization in France for ten years now. And within that, of course, there is also a struggle against war, against militarization.

L: How did French society in general react to the fact that the war had started? Was it in any way connected with previous attitudes towards Russia? That is, how do the French see Russia in general? Do they know anything at all about the existence of Ukraine?

J: As French people we are used to France always intervening. France's imperialism is very strong. French society, of course, knows both where Ukraine is and knows quite well where Russia is. Traditionally and historically, most French people support or like Russia, Russian society, Russian culture. But there are also many people who support Putin and his government specifically.

What's been going on since the war started? Probably the opinions of people who initially had no opinion at all have changed. People who didn't particularly know, say or feel anything about Ukraine before are now supporting Ukraine.

Because French society is used to the French state always intervening, they are also used to thinking that their opinion about what is happening abroad is important, that it can change the general sit-

uation in the world. The egocentrism in France is very strong: in public speech, they always talk about French civilization, French culture, that we have a responsibility to help, or to save, or just to speak out about what is happening in other countries. This is very important to understand because it explains, for example, why Macron behaves like a new Napoleon: he thinks he has an important role to play. No wonder that Macron always wants to get to where the important decisions are made, and that he tries to play always this role of rescuer and helper of countries that are under oppression by the enemies of French imperialism.

L: And who are the enemies of French imperialism in this case?

J: France was always between Russia and the United States during the Soviet Union and the Cold War, occupying neutrality because de Gaulle was anti-American, let's say, and French society was also very much against America.

There is what the French state thinks, and then there is what the people think. Traditionally, a large part of the people of France are always against their own state, but that doesn't mean that they are all leftist and critical, rather, even the opposite. A great many who call themselves anti-imperialist here in France, for example, they supported the Assad regime, they support Putin, they supported Gaddafi. A lot of people think that being against America doesn't mean being against Russia. And being against the French state, bribed by the American state, also means supporting their [the Americans'] enemies. They consider these enemies to be Russia, Iran, and other regimes like Gaddafi, Assad in Syria, etc.

L: So it's like this idea of a bi-polar world where there's one strong enemy and a second strong enemy.

J: Yes. And that's why Macron has been very unpopular in recent years: because of the Covid, because of the "yellow vests". People's opinion has also turned more against the state. People who two, three, four years ago were more neutral and didn't know who to vote for, are now voting against the state, against Macron. And so, as far as the war in Ukraine is concerned, there is a connec-

the state apparatus, and in my opinion they did not choose the right apparatus, but they chose the right thought process.

And, in my opinion, it is pointless to talk about anarchists or activists, we should talk about societies. Societies have the power to influence the state and large-scale politics. Maidan, by the way, was such an example. No one expected from Ukrainians that they could practically cancel the policy of their state and make another choice through a people's movement. People came out and expressed a concrete political opinion, suggested to stop the situation. The people's movement supported this, besides, there are always discussions within the people's movement.

I don't live in a war zone, and that is sometimes an advantage, sometimes a disadvantage. The disadvantage is that you don't understand people's pain and fear, you observe it from afar. But it gives you an opportunity to think about the alternative. I'm not talking about objectivity. Sometimes people like to say that distance gives objectivity – that's completely wrong. Objectivity is both my position and the position of those fighting in Ukraine. But sometimes you can think about alternatives, and people who are fighting don't even have the opportunity to think about alternatives.

L: Anyway, thank you very much for explaining everything, how things work for you, what your thought processes are, what influences them. And I think that even though our opinions may not coincide, it's better than no public dialog. Just exchanging statements, as is happening now, does not help in this situation. So it's great to talk. Good luck to you and I hope to meet you many more times.

themselves. And it is convenient – "we do not support and have the right to go about our daily business".

D: I totally agree with you now. I think this crisis in Ukraine has exposed the real eternal problems, and even the problems of anarchist theory. Why did I mention diplomacy earlier? I was reasoning at an abstract level: where we live is low politics. Perceiving state diplomacy as an abstraction is also an element of theory, even of anarchism and Marxism. We think there is everyday life and politics at an abstract level. Somewhere that may be true. From the point of view of high politics, it doesn't care about people's daily problems and affairs. But on the other hand it's not true. It is just another stage, another level of politics. Why do anarchists in Ukraine, Belarus, Germany and even Greece talk about high politics? We realize that we can't really influence it in any way.

People avoid high politics in Greece and in Ukraine because they realize that the scale and size of everyday politics has a boundary. Makhno, the Bolsheviks, the anarchists, the syndicalists in Spain, in Russia, and so on – these were movements of huge scale that affected all levels of politics. There is no such thing now. And it is naive to think that we can change anything with the groups that exist now. First of all, we have to recognize the fact, which the Ukrainian anarchists who joined the army have recognized – we have to act and work together with the state apparatuses now in the world. Either it will be the army or diplomacy, but something is bound to happen.

As for a specific war, I think the only thing you can do without participating in the army and staying living inland is to form a local group. I don't know how effective that is, as it depends on the scale of the war, the enemy's equipment, and their strategy. As for politics – it's the only political choice that has any result. And then you have to recognize the fact that difficult choices had to be made by those who are fighting today (although I don't agree with that choice). They realized that they were cooperating with

tion, because all these people after the "yellow vests" became more conspiracy-minded. According to polls, more than 50% of people in France believe in conspiracy theories and most of them (both far-right and far-left) are also against the French state. And when you compare these results with polls about the conflict in Ukraine, you notice a very strong correlation: these same people support Putin. They think the war in Ukraine is a problem created by America. And America is on the side of France, and so people who are against their state, which means Macron, are also against America, which means they are on the side of Russian imperialism.

We saw this when we went to the protests against the war. They were not exactly protests against the war, there were very different opinions involved, which were actually just for Putin or against Putin, for Macron or against Macron. And that's how people looked at the conflict, the war that's going on in Ukraine. And they often don't really have an opinion about Ukraine, they haven't been there, maybe they haven't met Ukrainians, they don't have much information about what's going on there. They may not know what really happened there in 2014 with the Maidan, in fact most people do not know.

L: It turns out that no one perceives Ukraine as a subject at all. You said, for example, that you are particularly interested in the topics of armaments, militarization in general, French society as represented by the police, and post-colonial intentions, i.e. when armaments are sold somewhere to Africa or somewhere else. And there is a lot of talk in our discourse that this war is, at the very least, the first step or it could become the first step of the Third World War, in which, in principle, almost all of Europe is already involved to some extent, and France, probably, among others.

So, I was wondering how this approach has changed really in France. Do the French or the French state in general believe in such a threat, that it could escalate into a full-scale war of the Western world against the Eastern world or something like that? And how much has militarization increased, how much has the military bud-

get increased? Have you had more people being drafted or contracted into the military? Is it possible to say that the economy is gradually being shifted to the military sector?

J: When Macron first came to power, he immediately promised war, then he used that word against the COVID. He intends to let the French people know that we have a special situation and that we will have to fight and there is a big threat looming over us. There was a lot of public talk about this already before the war in Ukraine. And so we also had to fight against the militarization that is already going on within French society.

Then, when the war started, it became an additional reason for the authorities to develop their military rhetoric more. Now specifically the situation has changed a lot. The last years the budget of the Ministry of Defense was 30 billion euros, in this year, 2023, it became 43 billion. And they promise to increase the budget to 50 billion by 2025. At the same time, they say that we should prepare for war. They said that at the beginning of the conflict, and they also said a lot about the nuclear threat. Even though geopolitical experts say that this is not the biggest threat.

I don't have an opinion on this because I think Putin is willing to do anything. I wouldn't be surprised if he hit Europe with a nuclear bomb, even though I don't believe in it very much. But the fact is that in public speech and in the media, the French authorities have been very vocal about this to scare people. And you can see the changes in society that are associated with this. We've already been promised both a war economy and military sovereignty. For example, at the end of the month, large-scale military exercises begin: 10,000 soldiers in southern France, and then in northern France to simulate attacks from sea and land. These exercises begin in February and will continue through May. This is the first time such an exercise has been conducted.

On the streets, these changes are also noticeable. For example every day I go to work, I go to the train station, and everywhere, at all the stops in front of the station, I see propaganda to join the

back to the level of grassroots politics and point out that Ukrainian anarchists have decided to participate in any way in the war, which is now a massive phenomenon.

We see that there is practically no split among anarchists and other left-wing anti-authoritarian activists in Ukraine about what to do. That is, they have chosen a certain way of participating in this and they have their own position on it. That's a fact. Which we can agree or disagree with. But there are those who want to support deserters and those who don't want to fight. Not to defend their homeland, but to save human dignity, for example in the West. We often talk, as far as the anarchist movement is concerned, about solidarity, that we can count on each other. And my question is this – can we really? Do calls to support those who have fled really materialize into practical action? Because I see now, being in Poland, that all this support has lasted a month and a half. In Poland, and in Germany as well, a lot of people have taken the position "everyone, let's help refugees". Come, comrades! We will receive and warm you! It all lasted a month and a half. Solidarity works when it is critical and sharp, but I don't think any of the anarchists in Greece would agree to live in the same room for the next 5 years with a person from Ukraine who didn't want to fight.

My point is that this war has exposed not only our theoretical contradictions, it has become so striking that now we cannot judge it without having been there. To the extent that we can say "the war must be understood in such and such a way" without having been in it. Obviously, we now see a different stance between those who are at war and those who "theorize" war outside of it. Do you think it's worth building solidarity with people that have chosen differently. And I don't see these attempts to make connections. We may not send money for protective body armor, but then we have to come up with some new project that we can implement within Ukrainian society. We will sign up, raise money, for example. But everyone just took their position and do not have any dialog among

ple who do not want to fight protect not only their dignity, but also the dignity of humanity, because they do not become part of one apparatus that will be against them later. And it is necessary to build a truce and peace in Ukraine, everyone is talking about it. After that we should demand from the international commission, international figures from Russia and the West, to organize a real referendum in the East of Ukraine. And not a referendum like the one that the Russian Federation did – it's shit and we all know it. The problem in Eastern Ukraine is not a new problem. In my opinion, it is pointless to say that it was created only by the Russian Federation, because the Ukrainian state 10–14 years ago published reports that there is such a problem of one state, but two countries. That something should be done about it. Unless there is a popular movement that supports an adequate and reliable referendum in Ukraine – there will be an endless war. Guns are a dead end. I want to put aside the textbook of the anarchist movement.

Why? The main base of people who support joining the military now is "enough theory". I respect that reasoning. But we need a reasoning that doesn't so openly coincide with that of the state and nationalists. We can't avoid that situation. And as far as territory is concerned, it would be ideal for Ukraine to have all its territories after the war. And this is not about economics. It's about social phenomena that are intensifying because of the war and in parallel with the war. And it is necessary to make political choices that take into account such negative factors as militarism, nationalism and indifference of ordinary people. And of course the loss of people. I mean in a practical sense.

What should be done in the future? We have to find some kind of balance.

L: You are now talking more about geopolitical solutions. How diplomacy can solve something. I think you'll agree with me that neither anarchists in Ukraine nor anarchists in Greece have any influence on how diplomats will negotiate the territory of Russia, Ukraine, etc. I would just like to go back to our level of influence, go

army. And this is everywhere now. We were even surprised, because there were always propaganda advertisements for the army, for the police, but now this propaganda is everywhere. And it all relates to this policy, in which they are trying to increase the size of the army, to buy as many weapons as possible. And we're talking about huge numbers here, because they have enough budget now to buy all this stuff. They're preparing for war, but they never explain exactly what the threat is, why France needs to prepare, why we fear a war that's happening on the other side of Europe. We don't know that for sure.

I'm not saying this war is impossible, I'm just saying that nothing has been done to explain to people whether the threat is actually real or not.

Lots of changes in the energy sector as well. Now we see Macron running around looking for new sources of gas and fuel. Most of our gas and oil comes from Kazakhstan, Norway and Saudi Arabia, and not so much from Russia actually. And now Macron is trying to increase supplies from Algeria, for example, from other countries, so that France is as independent of Russian gas as possible.

L: Then it seems that there is a militaristic turn in society, a split over who to support, and such a polarization of opinions. And how is this public discourse reflected in the movement? In general, how do French anarchists or groups that have publicly stated, for example, their position on the war, how do they see it?

J: I would say that the anarchist movement does not support the war, and there is a part of this movement that supports popular resistance, which has probably some illusions about how it is really possible to fight there, how an anarchist can fight against Russia in Ukraine. But most anarchists don't choose sides, they criticize both Russian imperialism, European imperialism, and the Ukrainian state. They are more comfortable just not participating too much in these discussions about the war in Ukraine.

L: So it's just to find disadvantages, to find faults in all three sides, to criticize all sides, to proclaim solidarity with the working class or with the people of Ukraine, but in what this solidarity is expressed is not really clear. In words?

J: Well, it's not clear, because it's more in words. I'll tell it like it is: at the beginning of the war there was a feeling on adrenaline that something had to be done, a lot of people thought, "Shit, shit, shit, something is happening." A lot of people checked what they really knew about Ukraine, and most people realized that they didn't know anything at all and that we had almost no connection with Ukrainian anarchists. And we haven't seen, I haven't seen, to be honest, that in France anarchists actively organize discussions, presentations, film screenings, where they would invite Ukrainians to discuss the situation. It looks like we have almost no communication. It often happens that we feel sorry that Ukrainians are not present, but it's as if we can't find them.

That is, the anarchist movement in France has no ties with Ukrainians and with comrades in Ukraine. And even with comrades from Russia there are more connections, so sometimes it turns out that Russian anarchists are invited to talk about the situation in Ukraine.

L: You say: we didn't know, we can't invite. Do I understand correctly that most of the people you're talking about don't know that there are, for example, "Solidarity Collectives" in Ukraine, that there is a part of the movement that went to the front, and they also have their own channels there? It's assumed that everyone knows about it, because it's present in the media sphere, it's on social networks. I just wonder how far this representation goes, because, in principle, the guys are constantly translating all their posts into English, that is, they are trying to work with the European audience, with the European movement. And it turns out that it's as if it doesn't reach France? Or is it more a question of the fact that no one really wants to make too much effort to look for someone, to invite someone? That's the impression I get, because if I want to do

L: Maybe you want to say personally your opinion or your movement's opinion about Ukrainian anarchists joining the state army?

D: I forgot to say before and it has to do with my opinion. In the summer we had an event – a presentation with comrades from the Autolexia organization in the Exarcheia. Quite a small organization: it consists of about 4 people. It is the only organization that is openly for Ukraine (support military defense against Russia and so on) and supports the decision of Ukrainian anarchists to take part in the army. There was a man speaking at this event, saying that there is no other way but to join the army. And people disagreed. In Greece there is a very strong movement against the army and if you are in favor of it, you are either a nationalist or a Stalinist. My opinion on this is quite traditional anarchist, that we should defend our home, our family, our loved ones, the people's society, but not the state. But if everyone has left and there is no people's society in the city, in the village. If you don't have it, it is pointless to fight for the state. Of course, it is not only about the state, but also about the victims of recent years.

As for the territory, there was a man from Ukraine at this event and he spoke very strongly in favor of participating in the army and we should all do so. His arguments were that all the weapons after the war could be used by the anarchists to continue their struggle. But I objected, because in any case, the equipment of the revolutionaries and the equipment of the state were the same before WWII (this was the case in the October Revolution, Ukraine, even China). Since then, technology has gotten more sophisticated in this area and the state knows how to use it. You can't use that equipment and it's important to realize that. For example, it takes 30 people to maintain an F-16 airplane, but how many people do we have? Do you think we can utilize it? Or a tank? The efficiency of the Army today is very dependent on logistics, satellites, and other technology. Such equipment cannot be organized without hierarchy. And the movement against the army is not a moral movement. And peo-

The Greek Communist Party has traditionally been pro-Russian, like many other communist parties in the West. During the last few years, of course, the Greek Communist Party has changed a lot. They have a new secretary general who comes from a left-radical background. They have become more critical of NATO, they are against Europe, etc., but also now against Russia, Putin. They even started to write texts and analyses that modern Russia is mafia capitalism and has nothing to do with the USSR or the ideas of communism, that Putin uses the tradition and the name of Lenin to present himself as an anti-fascist, but that he himself is a real fascist. That there are Nazis and fascists in Wagner. They are actively talking about it.

When the war in Ukraine started, on the same day, the Communist Party demonstrated in front of the Russian embassy against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. They have a base of activists, syndicalists, who are involved in the workers' popular movement. They are active and effective there. They are doing good things as far as workers' rights and so on and also have their influence among the smaller leftist groups. Thus, after that, there is no one left to support Russia. In recent years, the Communist Party has also influenced anarchists who sympathize with the syndicalism of the Communist Party. And many people realized that the People's Republics are a showcase of the Russian federation, there are bandits, mafiosi, and Russians there.

The crazy people who actively supported the LDNR in 2014 and 2015 and raised money – they still do. They also organized a protest in which quite a few people participated. All the major leftist parties in Greece are openly anti-Russia and anti-Putin. The picture becomes more complicated when it comes to Ukraine – people are more or less together against Russia, but as for Ukraine – even within the same organization you can hear different opinions and there is not even a common understanding of what it means to "support Ukraine".

something, I look for ways to do it. I ask if I don't know, I ask my friends how to get in touch with Ukrainian anarchists, I google, after all. And it sounds strange to me, as if we live on different planets and we can't contact each other.

And then this is the question for me: is it a question of language, is it a question of some kind of really just remoteness, a question of lack of former ties between these regions? Or is it more like, as you said, a comfortable position where we've criticized everybody, but to really get firsthand information, it takes effort, and it's like it's going to be this kind of uncomfortable conversation that's going to give us mental anguish and we're going to have to rethink our views on our theory about the war? What do you think this has to do with?

J: From the very beginning there was a lot of information coming from Operation Solidarity, and there were French groups like the Longo Maï society, that participated in solidarity, and there were other groups that sent material, money. But in France nothing was organized in the form of resistance support or public solidarity. I don't include myself because I read Russian and I have some connections, so I have more information. But it seems to me that most anarchists who had no connection with Russia, Ukraine or Belarus, who don't speak Russian, they got their information from two or three Telegram channels and maybe from CrimethInc translations.

In my opinion, this information is not enough to understand what is really happening in Ukraine. We – French anarchists – have such a big problem: we are not an international movement, international solidarity is very weak in France, and this is also due to the fact that many people do not speak other languages. It's very difficult to organize an event here where there will be a translation even in English. They may say I'm too critical, but I myself suffer from the fact that nothing is ever translated, it's very difficult to communicate with people. So yes, few events are organized where foreign activists are invited to speak about what is going on in their country. And at the same time, two or three months after the war

started, the public attention to Ukraine dropped a little bit, because we are also used to jumping from one topic to another, even if the topic is war, where people are dying. The main topic changes anyway.

Our movement, the anarchist movement, is also influenced by the media in what we focus on. I'm speaking for myself now, this is my critique of what is actually there. We know little and intervene little, and our international solidarity is very weak and very difficult to organize.

And so if you come from Belarus or from Ukraine, do an event to explain what's going on, quite a lot of people will come, because it's a rare event. People are still interested, and they know that they don't know much, so I can't say that they ignore or that they don't care, because it's not true. People are interested, but they won't seek out information on their own, and that's a big problem really. I mean, first of all, it's initially very difficult to find information, and secondly, people just don't look for it. They only look for it if they have a special interest in what is happening in the East.

L: It's very interesting to analyze how everything happens in the movement, because we used to say that we're all equal, that every anarchist has a voice. But in the end it turns out that we are still reproducing the way it is under capitalism, and the country we live in, how much our country sets the pace in the world, how much more important it is in the world. It's as if our votes also gain or lose some weight.

What I mean by that is this. You said that people will come to listen, to get information, but rather not seek it out on their own. I don't remember where I read about it, but anthropologically it's a consequence of colonialism, when you're like a titular nation, you have to have people come to you and explain. So some people have to interest you and you basically don't have to, you don't even have that need. It's like a boss and a subordinate. When the boss doesn't empathize with the worker, he doesn't think about what the worker does when he comes home, how tired he is, and

ideas – in general a kind of spectrum, and this spectrum starts with social democrats and center-leftists, and ends, obviously, with revolutionary anarchists.

When there was Maidan, people perceived it as a movement of squares, as it was in Spain, Greece, Syria, Egypt, and so on. There are people who believe that this movement started from the states. So, all these people supported Ukraine, Maidan, despite the fascists and the far right. They understood that a fascist in the square and ordinary people are not one political body. They understood the difference. And this is a personal experience of participating in the square movement in Greece itself – there were fascists there too, very active. And we were in the same place with them. We didn't talk and we didn't interact, but we were together.

But there were also people who did not support Russia (even during the Maidan nobody openly advocated Russia) but supported the so-called People's Republics. They were convinced that the People's Republics were not a consequence of Russian aggression, but that they had their own autonomy (with Russian influence) and should be supported. Of course, they considered radical elements, people like Motorola and other Russian thugs. They argued that there was a struggle within the government itself and there were more Putinist elements and opposed such elements. But here are real communists who support regional autonomy – these are the kind of people we will support. And frankly speaking, I used the same argumentation to support Maidan. Now after all these years, I am not so positively in favor of Maidan. And I used to say that it didn't matter that there were fascists there and so on. Our comrades in Ukraine were not as strong as we were and we couldn't kick them out. But that doesn't characterize everyone. The reality is different. After all, even the radical people in eastern Ukraine were not real autonomists and were just proxy agents of Russia. And the disinformation worked quite effectively.

A lot has changed since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

tension between Turkey and Greece and the government can propagandize even more on the basis of this – "we need to spend large amounts of the state budget on guns, on defense, in case Turkey invades. We will not be like Ukraine, we will be better prepared". But of course Ukraine was better prepared in my opinion. Naturally, many people realize that this is propaganda. It is no secret that apart from military aviation, the army in our country is in a deplorable state. There is not enough money for the health care system, etc., as "everything goes to warships, new guns for the northern part of the army and other military things." Such speeches are made in our country all the time and are a typical element of Greek politics, but after the outbreak of war in Ukraine they became more frequent and even more exaggerated.

L: So what you're saying is that your government is using this military card to fight the same Alliance member? As if the Alliance is supposed to guarantee members security? It's very interesting that even within NATO, governments expect someone to set them up, to cheat them. This makes the Alliance first of all unsustainable, and secondly, meaningless. It's as interesting as it is paradoxical how the NATO project works. In that the center group is Western/Central Europe, interested in expanding its borders so that their borders are not first in the event of conflict.

What are the dominant positions (if I may say so, since I know that in Greece everyone has a different opinion) in society? Is there any overwhelming opinion that people more or less agree with? Or are there opinions that stand apart? Perhaps they differ from each other or contradict each other altogether?

D: As far as Ukraine is concerned, the situation and the picture of political positions has changed somewhat since the Maidan. When there was Maidan and the crisis in eastern Ukraine, most activists supported Ukraine. And you have to understand what I mean by "activists" – in Greece there are many left-wing organizations and also anarchist organizations, but there is no specific boundary between them. There are different tendencies, writings,

so on. But at the same time, when the worker goes and talks to the boss about his problems, he thinks: what kind of mood is the boss in, can I talk to him now?

So what I'm saying is that there's like a habit of putting yourself in the other person's shoes or a habit of always putting yourself first, because you realize that reciprocal interest in you doesn't always work.

And I'm not saying now that we have a boss-subordinate relationship between Western and Eastern Europe, that's not what I'm talking about. But what I mean is that it's as if this tone is being set anyway. The French anarchist movement, at least, seems to us more developed, more self-sufficient than in Eastern Europe, for various reasons: both the historical context influences, and of course, the political structure of the system that is now established (there it contributes, and in our country, for example, it does not). It turns out that Ukrainians have to come and tell you. And from our side it turns out that way too, such sporadic solidarity. That is, we ask, we try to get in touch with French or German comrades when we need help, we need funds, money, solidarity actions, we need, perhaps, sometimes pressure on your local authorities, and we come with this request, we get something and we go back. And this solidarity, as if declared by the anarchists, this kind of international universal solidarity, it still seems to work on capitalist principles: that we come to the person who has more resources, this person listens to us, gives us these resources favorably and forgets about us, and we forget about him. Until the next time we need to come together again at that point.

And in this case, I am not criticizing anyone in particular: neither the French, nor the Ukrainians, nor the Belarusians, nor those who go on informational, fundraising tours. In general, I am just saying that it has just dawned on me that we still have to work and work to make real solidarity exist in the real world, not only in our texts or in our heads.

J: I totally agree with that, and I think we have to tell the truth: we in Western Europe live and stay in our comfort zone. We always criticize people in the US that they don't want to speak other languages, that they think everything revolves around them, but it's actually the same in France: French society and French anarchists don't try hard enough to find common ground either.

It's just that, like you said, we wait for information to come to us, and if it doesn't, we don't seek it ourselves. You mentioned, for example, lack of empathy – yes, there is something like that, I've noticed it too. If we talk about my experience, for example, in my struggle – the struggle against police violence – we fight together with the families of the victims. These people are not activists, they are not anarchists, but they fight for the truth, they fight for justice. And very few anarchists fight alongside them because it's just too difficult for them, first of all, to find a common language with them, and secondly, the other problem is the lack of empathy. A lot of people find it difficult to put themselves in the other person's shoes. For example, if you talk about repressions, about Assad's regime or Lukashenko's regime, people will listen with interest, but I think it will be hard for them to put themselves in your place. And that's why it will be very difficult for them to understand what you really need, because we, as you said well, we are used to the fact that if people are in trouble, if they are in danger, they just come here, they get refugee status, or they don't get it, but the main thing is to come here to be safe. And then if there are collectives, like La Cantine Syrienne (Syrian Canteen), they organize here in France as a foreign collective of anti-authoritarian activists, and they're brilliant with that. But very few people actually join them or organize with them. You come, you talk about your problems – we're interested, but you're left alone as a human being.

Sometimes I ask myself if I'm really an anarchist or not, because a lot of what I see in the anarchist movement is a very strong individualism, self-centeredness, and no sense of solidarity. Not a sense of solidarity, but, I think….

population there is conservative (I mean right-wing). In the South (Athens) they are more or less indifferent, I would say.

Also in Greece there are many internal problems and people in big cities don't have so much personal time and energy to worry about things like the war in Ukraine. Of course, the Ukrainian community even did rallies in the central square of the capital and the locals sympathized with them, but that's it.

L: Don't you observe such a sentiment that people who are against the current government don't believe TV? Accordingly, they may on the contrary love Putin, just because he is the enemy of my enemy and becomes my friend (in this case, the current government)?

D: Yes, there is this: people think that if the TV said something, the average person in Greece thinks it's a lie

L: Do you think the war affects your politics in any way, any social relations, or is it so far away that you don't think about it? Is the government taking advantage of this situation and if so, how?

D: Of course, the government is taking advantage of this situation, I think, in two ways:

First, there was a wave of inflation in Greece after the start of the war in Ukraine, but not too serious. The Greek government claimed that this was due to the war. However, there were studies conducted by independent institutes, at the end of which it turned out that the government's statements are speculation, that the war in Ukraine has no direct impact on the Greek economy. Energy has become more expensive, but not really noticeably. In my opinion, this is the reason why the average Greek citizen thinks that the war is something distant, that it affects only the material sphere and also perceives the war as a historical phenomenon.

Secondly, the Greek government is actively using this situation as a negative example. They say: "Look at what is happening in Ukraine! Don't talk or speak against NATO! NATO is the defense of our country. You see what is happening where there is no NATO? There is war there." And at the same time, indeed, there is always

Greek media also have very big problems with freedom of speech, they are at the bottom of the European Union in this respect, with countries like Hungary, Poland and so on, as far as media journalism is concerned: radio, TV. The Internet is a different matter.

People who know nothing about the history of Ukraine and Russia, who watch news only on TV – support Ukraine. And it depends on the age of people, for example, elderly people watch news only on TV. In the south of the country people who do not watch news on TV and read information on the Internet and know about the situation remain either more or less indifferent, either for Russia or for Ukraine, but they do not support someone strongly in this situation. They don't know what they should do in this situation and do nothing. There is a large Russian-speaking community in the North, namely in Thessaloniki and in Kavala.

For reference: there was an ethnic minority, the Pontic Greeks, living in the territory of the present-day Caucasus and Ukraine. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the (at that time) center-left government of Greece adopted a repatriation program, as a result of which a large number of Pontian Greeks moved to Greece, as well as their relatives, often of non-Greek origin. Most of them settled in the North of Greece. This stratum of society is most often in favor of Russia, the people who came here after the collapse of the USSR, they hate the West. Why?

Because when they moved here, they experienced racism and did not receive any support from the state in the form of benefits, money. At the same time, they feel melancholy and nostalgia for the Soviet Union. All this, combined, is a great trauma for them. When I lived in Thessaloniki, they told me that the USSR was a paradise. There is no comparison with the situation in Greece. Although, of course, we realize that the Soviet Union is poverty, repression, but these people don't even put that in comparison with what they had to go through to get to Greece. This Russian-speaking society is affecting the Greeks in the North. Also, the local

L: Practitioners of solidarity.

J: Yes, yes, because there is solidarity through words and there is solidarity through action. We are very good at writing texts, press releases, doing conferences and debates where we say that solidarity is needed, that we are in solidarity. But when it comes to concrete actions, I honestly don't see them. And as far as Ukraine is concerned, everybody, even me, was very happy and inspired at first, and we were calling and calling friends who could send cars, things to support the territorial defence. But how long did it last? How long did it really last? Germany and Poland showed themselves very much in solidarity. As for France, I don't know…

I think if I can say something positive about the anarchist movement in France in relation to the situation that comes from the war in Ukraine, I would say that French anarchists are quite actively fighting against militarization and military things here in France, against the militarization of the police, and also in general against militarization and military discourse, the war economy. There's just a big movement going on right now against the new pension law. It's all connected, because if they put 50 billion euros into the military budget, they have to take it out of the other budget. That's how the capitalist economy works. And I think French society and French anarchists are fighting quite actively against military capitalism. And how that helps you, I don't know.

L: Yes, it's a big question of how to link our struggle with our enemy, which has now become more active in the region, and how not to make all anarchists give up their local struggle. I don't support the view that we should just stop fighting against NATO, because right now NATO specifically can help defeat Russia.

In order to win this war, my opinion, it is not necessary to increase the budget of France so much and to play with ten thousand people, to conduct exercises on sea and land, but it is enough just to send a lot of weapons to Ukraine very quickly. Instead of just talking about it for years, talking about how important it is, and in the end not doing it, make it so that the whole year, basically,

the whole of Europe is suffering from an energy crisis. And everybody realizes that this war can end very quickly if Putin's regime is defeated. But, as I understand, the European politicians do not really want this regime to be defeated, so it all ends up choking in some convulsions, it is prolonged many times, and then just each of the presidents of each country uses this military rhetoric in order to simply strengthen the power, to strengthen the right-wing tendencies, to strengthen some conservative, militaristic sentiments in their country. That is, in fact, power has won again. The war is not over, the government won again, collected more taxes, produced more weapons, and those who produce them profited even more. And Ukrainians continue to fight, and our comrades continue to travel around Europe and collect money to give some of our anarchists warm clothes so that they do not freeze in the trenches. Unfortunately, we can't do much about it with the forces we have now, but it remains a fact.

Thank you so much for the talk. I think it was very informative, for me, for sure. I think it is very important to learn as much as possible about each other and about different movements in order to understand how we can communicate further, how we can build these bridges, what local contexts we should take into account. Thank you very much for explaining, for sharing. Good luck to you in your local struggle, because I think it is also very important. As someone who left a police state, I do not wish France to become such a state.

J: Yes, yes, thank you very much, because it's very important for me too that we can communicate about this, because I miss it here. You still have a lot to explain to us – to us French people.

L: We will have to learn French, I think. Otherwise, again the Americans from CrimethInc will explain to you what is happening in Ukraine.

J: Don't let CrimethInc explain it to us.

Do Greeks care about the war in Ukraine? Skepticism of Greek anarchists

L: Today we are transported to Greece, where anarchist Dimitri Smozkous, formerly a member of the Alpha Capa organization in Athens and the squat factory Ifanet in Thessaloniki, lives. Dimitrios translates historical books, works at the National Archive of Oral History of Greece and specializes in Eastern European history.

How did society react to the war? You live within Greek society, and as it turns out, it [attitudes towards the war] depend a lot on the location of the region and its historical relationship to the Russian Empire or the USSR. Were some peoples oppressed by the Russian empire/USSR or were they strategic allies? Or maybe you have a common enemy – the USA, etc.? For example, in India and Africa everyone is in favor of Russia, because for them the main colonialist is Great Britain, America, Western Europe, etc.

D: First of all, it should be noted that Greek society is somewhat fragmented. What I mean is that it's one thing what the media in Greece say and another thing what they say on the streets in the north of Greece or in the south of Greece. And what does the Greek media say?

Greek media is for Ukraine, for Zelensky and very much against Putin and Russia. Our government is now very right-wing and "western". They are without a doubt in favor of Ukraine as far as rhetoric and practice is concerned.