

The Ukraine War

No war but the class war

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

12 July 2023

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This article first appeared in The Anvil Vol 12 No 3, published 30 June 2023.

After the fall of the USSR in 1991, Ukraine became independent. The United States promised Russia that NATO would not expand eastwards, but it didn't take long for Uncle Sam to renege. Without a global rival to consider, and concerned to find a new mission for NATO after the end of the Cold War, successive US Presidents agreed to requests from most countries in Eastern Europe to join. As each individual new member sought security in NATO, the threat of NATO to Russia increased. In a world of competing States, security for one is bought at the expense of insecurity for its neighbours.

Independent Ukraine was a country split culturally and politically into two halves. Western Ukraine spoke Ukrainian and looked to build economic relations with the European Union, especially with Germany. Eastern Ukraine spoke Russian and looked to preserve its industrial integration with Russia. Corrupt oligarchs from the two factions alternated in power, while the working class was politically marginalised. In 2014, a protest movement against the Russian-leaning Viktor Yanukovich grew into the Maidan Uprising. Politically diverse at the beginning, it shifted to the Right after Fascists physically beat the Left into dropping their banners and ceasing propaganda. By late February, Yanukovich's party had deserted him and he fled. Pro-West corrupt oligarchs took charge.

Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, didn't take kindly to the defeat of his client and, the next month, sent the Russian army to occupy Crimea. A sham plebiscite ratified its accession to Russia, though it is probable that a genuine plebiscite would have achieved the same result, albeit with a smaller majority. In April, unrest started in the Donbas, covering the two most eastern Ukrainian provinces. Though the leaders there may have been politically independent at the beginning, it didn't take long before Russian soldiers and Russian guns turned them into puppets. A messy, low-level civil war started up, before largely petering out a year or so later.

In 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected President on an anti-corruption platform. Though Russian-speaking and Jewish, he nevertheless pursued a pro-Western course, aimed at joining both the EU and NATO. By 2022, Putin had lost patience and ordered the Russian army to invade. The Ukrainian army, better motivated and better organised, fought the invasion to a standstill and later recaptured significant ground. A Ukrainian offensive started a few weeks ago. It is making progress, but very slowly against a Russian military that is heavily dug in. A revolt by the leader of the Wagner group, a company of mercenaries, recently exposed deep divisions within the Russian ruling class and weakened Putin's position, perhaps seriously.

No War But the Class War

Anarchists don't support the nation State or its military. We therefore oppose the provision of money, weapons or personnel to the military forces of any State. Here in Australia, we have a special responsibility to oppose the Australian military.

Instead of supporting national militaries, we advocate fighting the class struggle, a position which does not change purely because one State invades another. We oppose war production. We encourage desertion, draft resistance, *selective* sabotage and diversion of war materiel to the revolutionary movement.

An exception to opposing the war effort is that we do not oppose specific measures to protect cities from aerial attack from planes, drones and such like. An exception to draft resistance is

that revolutionaries may submit to conscription in order to engage in anti-war activity within the military.

At the front, Anarchists encourage fraternisation and the refusal of offensive operations. In occupied territory, Anarchists should fight for leadership of the resistance. And finally, we maintain our position even if it leads to the defeat of the military forces of the State in which we live. If some other State invades Australia, we are prepared to see the State conquered and to conduct resistance against the occupier rather than contribute to the victory of the Australian State.

The Invasion of Ukraine

First and foremost, the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group opposes the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We oppose NATO and call for its dissolution, but the desire of the Ukrainian Government to join it doesn't justify what Putin is dishonestly calling a "special military operation". The invasion, though, doesn't change our class struggle position. In fact, we've seen the ruling class in both Russia and Ukraine escalate the class war on the working class. Russia has increased repression of mass anti-war movements while Ukraine has passed anti-worker and anti-Union laws. Given the ruling class are escalating their attacks, the working class must respond.

In Russia, Anarchists have largely taken a correct anti-war position (though their strategies are another matter). The politics of this are relatively uncomplicated. The Anarchist task is to build the class struggle and build anti-militarist resistance.

In Ukrainian territory under control of the Ukrainian State, the Anarchist task is, in principle, a mirror image of that in Russia, though conducted in more adverse circumstances. The Anarchist movement in Ukraine has largely abandoned the class position and engaged in various degrees of collaboration, even to the extent in some cases of volunteering for the army. We understand the pressures they are under, but that doesn't change the results of their actions. Anarchists need to boost the class struggle, defending civil rights and working class living standards, while maintaining hostility to the Ukrainian State. If and when a stronger working class movement is built, more concrete anti-militarist positions can be pursued.

In both countries, Anarchists should adopt a special position against aerial attacks on cities as direct attacks on the working class. When the Ukrainian Government, for its own reasons, defends against Russian bombs and drones, it is incidentally defending the working class, so Anarchists should allow these operations. We note that in May, Ukraine launched an aerial attack on Moscow, also an attack on the working class.

In occupied Ukrainian territory, there will be a desire for resistance. Further, in the event that the military effort of the Ukrainian State collapses and Russia conquers the country, the resistance would spread across all of Ukraine and the Russian occupation would quickly become impossible to maintain. Putin's invasion has unified Ukrainian national feeling against Russia, even to the extent of many in the east starting to learn Ukrainian. It is the task of Anarchists to build the resistance and fight for leadership of it. This will have to be done, not only against Russian opposition, but also against Banderaites and supporters of the open Nazis of the Azov Battalion.

Resistance in occupied Ukrainian territory should be conducted as far as possible with class struggle methods of strikes, demonstrations and selective sabotage. The occupation cannot be expected to respond to this non-violently, so the resistance will be compelled to take up arms in

self-defence. It is this resistance that should be the destination of arms diverted from the military by revolutionaries in either country. There is a vital difference between the Anarchist militias we envisage and the Ukrainian army. For the Ukrainian State, the struggle is a military one for the control of territory and populations. For Anarchists, the struggle is essentially political, one conducted arms in hand for self-defence. The primary goal is to fraternise with the enlisted ranks of the Russian army and turn Putin's tools into his enemies. Shedding blood, even Russian blood, is to be done only when necessary. A resistance that gained a reputation for killing only Russian officers and for releasing prisoners from enlisted ranks would be *very* bad for Russian morale.

Call to Action

The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group urges Anarchists around the world to adopt this principled position. We do not seek to identify a lesser evil to support in this war, but to redouble our efforts to make a workers' revolution to end it. We especially urge Anarchists in Ukraine, many of whom may be collaborating unhappily with the official war effort, to find a way back to the class struggle approach. It's the only way out.

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This article first appeared in The Anvil Vol 12 No 3, published 30 June 2023.

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