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“I, Kostya, Ukrainian high school student, member of the Direct Action union”

Interview by Patrick Le Tréhondat

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April 19, 2023

Please introduce yourself to our readers

My name is Kostya, I am a student of the second grade.
[Kostya lives in the Volyn region in northwestern Ukraine.]

How did you experience the beginning of the war?

In fact, I sensed that a full-scale invasion would soon occur, but I did not expect it to be so large and destructive. I remember the beginning very well. My mother asked me to buy food, which was practically non-existent, and told me to stay at home. The first week was very scary, nobody knew what was going to happen. We were just hoping for the best after that. My mental state became critical, I was very anxious, I was afraid of my future life and I became very pessimistic.

What has changed in your life in the last year?

In the past year, many things have changed. As I said above, my psyche became very unstable, I lost people for various reasons — one went abroad and another was killed by an enemy

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bullet during the “dfenazification”. Prices in the shops have become very high and my family had to give up many things that were common a year ago. I must also mention that our people are very united towards each other.

Under what conditions are you continuing your studies now?

We study full time, but one day a week we take e-learning courses. When an air raid starts, we get ready and go to the shelter (in the basement).

What about your leisure time in this time of war?

Music helps me to distract myself. I listen to a lot of things, the band I like the most is “Grazhdanskaya oborona”. I also sometimes watch various historical videos and films.

You are a member of the Direct Action trade union (Priama Diia). Why are you a member?

I have been interested in left-wing ideas, especially anarchism, for a year. After I finally realised that I was an anarchist, or rather an anarcho-communist, I started to look for an organisation. At that time, Direct Action started again and I was able to join it. There are several left-wing and anarchist organisations in Ukraine, but I chose Direct Action because it is composed of almost all students who have the same problems and complaints about our government. In this organisation I can help people and receive help from my brothers and sisters.

What are your activities as a member of Priama Diia?

Because of some problems I have not been actively involved in the union, but a week ago I took part in the first meeting of the members of the organisation. I am trying to spend more time with the union and get involved in some activities.

Are high school students protesting against government policy? If so, on what issues and how?

Ukrainian high school students are quite divided, many are dissatisfied with our government, very often supporters of left-wing ideas, another part, after the large-scale invasion, supported nationalist and right-wing ideas, and often supports our

government. Finally, there is a third group that doesn't care about anything, including the government, but they are not numerous.

We protest against the arbitrariness of the authorities, illegal arrests, violations of students' rights, corruption, etc. We disseminate information, organise rallies and protest.

How do you see your future?

I plan to enter the faculty of history or philosophy in Kyiv. I also hope to be active in left-wing organisations. I also have the possibility to join the Ukrainian armed forces if the situation at the front becomes critical and I have to defend my people. Thank you for your interest in the problems of ordinary Ukrainians.