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Repression in Lviv: a critical analysis

Rev Dia

19 October 2017

One week ago in Lviv, the SBU and the police launched a crackdown and a real campaign to discredit the Autonomous Resistance and Pirates activists. On the morning of October 12, according to a court decision, the activists were searched, and they themselves were taken in for questioning and detained until late at night. Almost all the equipment was confiscated, and the SBU wrote a blatantly false post about the detention of “Kremlin agents.” After that, the activists decided to hold a march scheduled for October 12, where they were attacked by the far right from C14 and the Carpathian Sich. Gathering about a hundred people, they went to the AO store, some of the activists noticed and called the police. Police, arriving at a place, detained a certain part of the ultra-right and blocked autonomous resistance activists in the courtyard of the house, where later, in addition, found a traumatic gun. All those present in the yard were detained and taken back to the police station for questioning. The portal hromadske.ua/ actively covered the topic of repressions in Lviv, several notes were written in defense of the joint-stock company on Ukrainiska

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Pravda, but mostly the media published a press release of the Security Service of Ukraine without any remarks. Human rights activists and, unexpectedly, Nadiya Savchenko defended Lviv activists.

Judging by a brief account of events, one thing can be noticed at once — in Ukraine, despite the Maidan, the SBU has old cadres from the Soviet KGB, in which they learned to write all sorts of “exculpatory” insults. Where they used to write about American spies, now they write about Russians, and as evidence they show photos of left-wing literature on the shelf. The actions of the SBU are not surprising at all, they fit into the gradual establishment of a police state in Ukraine. It is interesting that the Lviv court conducted searches on the 12th based on the JSC’s calls for a “social revolution”, from which it can be concluded that the Ukrainian state already openly recognizes such calls as illegal. It is not surprising that the far-right tried to attack the activists of the Autonomous Resistance — the far-right has long shown itself as opponents of any social liberation, as voluntary mercenaries of large landowners and politicians. Their leaders’ hatred of the AO stems from a desire to spread their influence to Lviv’s youth in order to use it later to monetize their projects (that is, to pursue politics for money). This is especially true of C14, which is actively setting up regional offices and Educational Assemblies in the regions to further knock out grants from “liberal donors”. The police and the far right, even in the absence of a direct agreement, are in fact one coalition pursuing the same interests. The former realizes these interests at the level of the department itself (the police seek to control more), the latter gives the police state the form of an idea (junta, for example).

In addition to the fact of repression, it is also clear why the repression was carried out against activists of the AO and Pirates. The format of these two organizations allows you to easily, thanks to a careful review of their information resources, find out their addresses, future meeting place, location of their

store owned by the organization, phone numbers of key participants, their passport data and photos. All this enabled the SBU and the far right to intimidate the above-mentioned organizations without much effort. From the outset, the practice of openness and publicity has meant that people are more willing to join such organizations, and that public organizations will be more actively supported by human rights defenders and journalists.

At the same time, the police call on their opponents looks extremely strange and even suicidal. In addition, it was immediately used by the far right against the JSC, because calling the police after calls to act against the police looks really hypocritical and pathetic. Apparently, the police themselves were not going to protect the activists, but only threw problems at them related to the “found” traumatic weapon. In practice, this shows that the police are not an aid service. And on the part of revolutionaries, turning to the police is both unethical and completely absurd.

In the end, unfortunately, the support that the organization’s openness and publicity should have given did not protect them from attack, the removal of the Sail Revolution community and the Facebook group, the seizure of equipment, and a sense of defeat. Moreover, it can be judged that the support provided was due to the personal connections of the activists, and not to the format of the activity chosen by the AO and the Pirates. It can be said that the activists themselves helped the punitive authorities and the Nazis by providing them with all the necessary information. At the same time, of course, it cannot be said that the adoption of basic security rules fully guarantees protection against repression — no, it does not guarantee (100% of this is not protected at all), however, significantly complicates the work of the authorities. With a reasonable distribution of information, compliance with the rules of conspiracy, such searches can affect far fewer people / property, and the far right will not know exactly

where to expect activists. Moreover, the banal encryption of phones and computers, the creation of fake accounts, would make it impossible or almost impossible (in case the computer is turned on) to delete any information platforms.

It should be expected that, in addition to open repression, the secret services will try to introduce into the environment or assets of the above organizations of the agent, for their subsequent complete destruction and discredit. Without any internal rules on information and conspiracy, it will be extremely difficult, if at all possible, to identify such an agent, because virtually everyone will know about everything (in some cases, including administrators of various social networks).

At the same time, the bet on legalistic activity with the expectation of “electoral” support of people who are not activists did not justify itself either in the situation with the Makhno March or this time. People did not come out to defend the activists who helped them a lot in defending their interests in the courts and in various instances, and this is to be expected. After all, citizens went to court because they did not want to have any direct confrontation with developers, police or any armed structures. In the case of political repression, it is completely absurd to hope for any support from the “electorate”, except moral. And since people in Ukraine as a whole cannot influence the actions of the state, except through conflict, the benefits of such passive moral support are extremely small.

The AO and their position on the anti-terrorist operation, the use of patriotic slogans and shouts did not help in this case. Some activists in the past have argued that the practical support of the anti-terrorist operation and the use of slogans popular among Ukrainian patriots (“Glory to Ukraine”, for example) will limit the organization’s anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian, but give it some authority in society. In practice, as expected, public opinion issues often depend on the media and the form of information presented. It did not cost the SBU and the far right to completely ignore all the nationalist and pop-

ulist rhetoric of the AO, and to expose them in their media as Kremlin mercenaries. At the same time, the nationalist agenda could (and in practice was) a stumbling block in keeping in touch with anarchist activists. This is once again proof that the use of populist and contradictory slogans and theses does not give full effect for “recognition” by society, does not provide protection against slander and hoaxes, but already makes the ideology of the movement unable to answer questions from its audience and, moreover, the audience is far from such views (in this case – the nationalists).

For all the errors we warned about in the article, it must be acknowledged that the Autonomous Resistance is not an open enemy of the anarchist movement or anarchism as an idea. However, the active advancement of doomed (or inconsistent) practices and ideas did not allow anarchist groups to fully coordinate their efforts with Autonomous Resistance activists. At the same time, former and current activists of the Autonomous Okrug have done much to promote the anti-authoritarian agenda in Lviv, promoting the idea of opposing police arbitrariness, lawlessness of owners and the far right. Therefore, despite all the criticism of their practices, it is to be hoped that the activists will survive the repression, take into account their mistakes and repel the police and the Nazis.