

Action and Organizational Work

In Memory of Martyr Dmitry Petrov

The Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists

22 April 2025

While remembering the martyr Dmitry Petrov, who was killed on April 19, 2023 near Bakhmut, together with other internationalists, the fighters of his group, Finbar Cafferkey and Cooper Andrews, I would like to return to the article “To be an independent force”. This is one of the last programmatic texts of the Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists, which Dima, in the middle of practical participation in the war and organizational activities, managed to write. And how was it written? It was November 2022, the town of Lyman. In the evening we returned from a not very successful assault on trenches near the recently liberated (and now newly occupied) village of Nevske on the border of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

There were no casualties in our platoon, but we failed to advance. And the next day, even before dawn, we will have to jump back on the armored APC and drive through the crossings on the Zherebets river which were shelled by Russian artillery. We will continue chewing through the defense of the occupants, which has been thoroughly fortified after mobilization. There were a few hours left to clean the weapon and sleep. And to surf the Internet, if there still was any energy.

The Internet was also difficult. The platoon was scattered around Lyman, and Starlink and more or less regularly working electricity were available only in the commander’s house, which in combat conditions is quite reasonable. Going into the house itself, where radios and tablets were charging, unit actions were being planned, and meetings were being held, without a proper good reason was considered inappropriate. But fighters who used the Internet for personal needs could stay in the hallway. It was as dark and cold as it was outside. Actually in these conditions some of the texts and posts published on BOAK media resources during that period were written. Including a small programmatic article “To be an independent force”.

Undoubtedly, in other conditions Dima could have developed the ideas expressed in it in much more detail. But he was not only an ideologist, but also a revolutionary in practice, acting in the conditions in which the current revolutionary struggle put him. And that is why the text was not very long, but meaningful, clear, concentrated, and at the same time could be read with pleasure – only Dima could formulate thoughts in such a way.

The article begins with a quote from Makhno: in the previous weeks, Dima, looking for answers to the existential questions facing the post-Soviet anarchist movement, had time to reread Nestor Ivanovich’s memoirs during the short time he had left for rest. Some passages he quoted

loudly and discussed with his comrades nearby. Dima's own reflections were an analysis of reality, but they were partly inspired by the ideas of our outstanding predecessor, who had fought in roughly the same areas a century before us. What are these words of Makhno's about? The great anarchist challenges the notion, widespread then and today, that anarchism as a social ideal has a place "only in the future and in unknown forms".

This protest of Nestor Makhno reflects an important component of Dima's worldview. Dima believed that the goal of our struggle should be to achieve victory, nothing less. He himself talks about this in another important theoretical article that forms the ideological foundation of BOAK, "To be a Revolutionary. Today":

"We want to remind all pessimists that there are no "objective" reasons for considering the social revolution and the triumph of libertarian ideas to be a matter of an indefinitely distant future. The speed and unpredictability of social changes in the modern world teach us one important lesson: everything is possible. Including freedom and justice".

Yes, of course, there are many worthy comrades who will say: I understand the unattainability of the revolution during my lifetime, but for me this does not cancel the responsible approach to revolutionary work for the sake of those who will fight and live after me. And yet, for Dima, disbelief in the revolution, which was already within reach, was a form of escape from responsibility and obligation. After all, without faith it is impossible to give oneself to the revolutionary cause with all one's strength, which in the end will inevitably affect the result.

But as faith without deeds is dead, so the goal without deeds cannot be achieved. In general, Dima was alien to determinism and vulgar positivism – both his own political development and the ideological school of the Kurdish movement had an impact. And so, as Nestor Makhno "threw himself into battle completely, without asking the Death for mercy", so Dmitry Petrov gave all his strength to the work that served to strengthen the anarchist movement and thus brought the revolution closer. Burning with the idea of creating an anarchist unit as an organized revolutionary project for the struggle in the post-Soviet space, he, a PhD scientist, a movement theorist with a huge organizational talent and the emotional and analytical intelligence necessary to organize our movement, fought as a storm trooper, in assault units. The kind that carried out particularly difficult and dangerous tasks. He didn't like the immediate material component of participating in combat. But he went through with it, because he believed in the fruit of these efforts, in revolution and victory.

And seeing his conviction and sincere kindness to everyone around him (after all, isn't it kindness to people and all living things that drives revolutionaries), not only his comrades, but in general all the people he met on his combat path were imbued with love for Dima.

I should note that like all outstanding revolutionaries, Dima was a multifaceted personality. He believed in the necessity of action here and now, but he was also convinced that this action should not be separated from organizational work and analysis of strategy and tactics. This is what his article "To be an independent force" is actually devoted to. Yes, action in the here and now is necessary. But:

"It is vital that these tasks and efforts serve the goals of revolutionaries – the reorganization of society on libertarian principles. This reorganization requires a powerful structured movement with great ideological and practical influence."

Loyalty to revolutionary commitments in the conditions of armed self-defense of Ukrainian society against Russian imperialism meant a certain amount of pragmatism. In anarchist circles there are still debates whether it is ethical and right to take the side of the “lesser evil” in the war between Russia and Ukraine. Dmitry Petrov and BOAK’s position overcame this all too simple dilemma. It is not a question of choosing the “less bad” state – all states are concentration camps, as we declared at the beginning of a full-scale war. Ukrainian society, which has retained much more space for autonomy and self-organization, has suffered and is suffering the most from Russian imperial aggression. We stood up in its defense. For without the defense of society, it is impossible to combine the militant work of the anarchists with the social revolutionary process, which is ultimately the goal of the revolutionaries. This is the first thing. And the second is that we have continued and are continuing our organizational building to strengthen our movement. In the context of a full-scale war, this struggle required an alliance with non-anarchist, including state actors. And the practical method was the creation of an anarchist/anti-authoritarian unit, a work to which Dima gave all his energy and eventually his very life.

The anti-authoritarian platoon, a group of libertarians in one of the airborne assault brigades, the latest military project – each of these areas of work was for Dima both a decisive battle requiring full physical dedication and a point of concentration of all organizational efforts. Action here and now without detachment from revolutionary analysis – this characterized the entire revolutionary path and political line of our comrade. These qualities became especially vivid during the full-scale war. And Dima died on this path, not having had time to complete so many things, forever leaving in our hearts a feeling of irreplaceable loss.

Following the Kurdish movement, in which our comrade also left a trace, we repeat – **Martyrs do not die, Şehîd Namirin!** The war in Ukraine continues, Russian imperialism and other imperialist forces are dividing their spheres of influence. Fascism, state repression, capitalist exploitation are on the rise all over the world. New lines of work, new battles lie ahead. The martyrs do not die, they stand shoulder to shoulder with us. They are an example, a lesson, an eternal instruction to continue the struggle. For us, BOAK participants and many other anarchists, Dmitry Petrov will always remain an example and a lesson. We shall not forget him and what he taught us!

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