

An anarchist on fighting for Ukraine

“There are values that we place above states”

Good Night Imperial Pride



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Since the first day of the full-scale invasion, anarchist D. has been part of the Ukrainian armed resistance against russia. He joined the anti-authoritarian platoon as a volunteer and then served as a paramedic in AFU. In 2023, when FPV drones appeared, D. recognized their potential, got trained as an operator, and continued to fight as a strike drone pilot. Good night imperial pride talked to him about the situation at the front, the offensive tactics of the russians, and the prospects of the modern anarchist movement.

What is the situation on the frontline now?

russia is advancing in Donbas. They have recently taken Kurakhove, one of the key towns for Ukrainian defence. At the same time, a battle for Pokrovsk is going on, which is also a key point for defence.

Ukraine is retreating all over Donbas because of the lack of infantry. There are several reasons for this. The most motivated part of the Ukrainian army is already tired, many have died, and not all of society is joining the fight. We lack a lot of resources.

We can also feel the impact of lacking Western military assistance at the time of the counter-offensive in the Zaporizhzhia region. Because of its delay, the counter-offensive started later, which, among other things, led to the exhaustion of brigades and heavy losses, and as a consequence, to lack of quality personnel.

For the most part, the retreat is orderly, we have time to occupy new defensive lines. Drones play a huge role, so getting to positions now is much more problematic and dangerous than it was in 2022 or even 2023. The grey zone (the area between the Ukrainian and russian first lines) has become much wider.

The occupiers are mostly assaulting with infantry. In small groups, they reach dugouts, fortifications, villages, and there they entrench themselves in cellars. On the way they are partially destroyed, but they wait for reinforcements to their positions and advance further. This is one of their dominant tactics when they face heavy resistance. Now that the pace of their offensive has increased, they have begun to employ motorised assaults as well, which was less the case in 2023.

Ukraine cannot end the war now because the russians are advancing rapidly and they do not want to stop. On the contrary, they are seeking to impose harsher conditions on Ukraine. In December 2024, they had the highest casualties in the entire war, which indicates their intention to advance, not to end, without considering the losses.

What are you doing on the frontline? What has happened in your life and your unit over the past year?

I am directly engaged in combat work, I have mastered a lot of attack drones over the last year. I am also involved in organisational processes. I believe it is important to develop managerial skills, this is one of the weaker links in the Ukrainian army, which is only just moving away from the Soviet post-communist authoritarian foundations. The people who fought from the beginning pulled a lot of responsibilities and did not grow much vertically, rather horizontally: they took on more and more responsibilities, burned out, or died. Unfortunately, this resource

has now been lost, and instead of motivated and experienced infantry people, battle management at headquarters is often handled by opportunists.

Ukraine is now heading towards putting more people with combat experience into management positions, but it is a bit late. It should have been done from the very beginning, people who have fought for a year and a half should have been transferred to headquarters, to management, to oust Soviet nomenklatura, bureaucrats and others who want to sit out the war in a cosy place.

The issue of rational organisation of processes, of crisis management, of management under resource constraints – all these are crucial issues both for fighting the war and for the growth of the anarchist movement. In our unit, the processes are arranged as democratically as possible. That is, we don't have a really vertical management and rather rely on facilitation than on imposition.

Our personnel are mostly volunteers, and we have contributed a lot to bring victory closer.

What is your main motivation to fight?

My main motivation is that I live here. I see what is happening, I know what Russia did in the occupied territories, how it massacres anyone who disagrees. This authoritarian regime must be stopped.

In an historical perspective, everything we are doing now is a big capital, which will come in handy in the future fight against Russia. Even if the conflict is frozen, the advances Ukraine has made are invaluable for the future resistance of democratic societies. When it comes to open conflict, all motivations and beliefs crystallise.

In addition, I want to avenge my friends in the movement who have been killed or taken prisoner by authoritarian regimes, who are suffering imprisonment for their resistance. Friends, if you are reading this, I am sorry that I have stopped writing to you. I am always with you in my thoughts and in my actions.

Do you consider it a contradiction for you as an anarchist to fight in the Ukrainian army?

I don't see any contradictions for myself. Yes, in any army there is a certain structure of coercion, but in the Ukrainian army least of all. Initiative, motivation, self-discipline: these are the values of people who stay true to anarchism in the long run, and these very values are very valuable and relevant in combat work. They are what's needed now.

I know a lot of examples when anarchists here, with small effort, have created around them structures of organisation and efficiency on which the whole defence is based. Considering that this is a very existential struggle, a struggle for survival, for fundamental things, then for an anarchist to fight for Ukraine is a must. This in itself is the right and ethical thing to do.

This is like asking whether anarchists should have participated in the French resistance. Because it was probably for the French state, wasn't it? There are values that we place above states, above capital, above superficial processes. These are the kinds of struggles and meanings that anarchists are usually very sensitive to. So it's hard to imagine an anarchist in Ukraine who wouldn't get involved in this struggle directly or in a supportive role.

What political changes do you think the anarchist movement of today can achieve? Where should we focus our political resources?

I'm out of the global process, my combat work takes me 24/7. But I can say for sure that it is worth organising anarchist structures, supporting anarchists in the Ukrainian army and focusing the attention of anarchists in Europe on the coming threats.

They should think about the areas in which they are going to confront parties like the German AfD, the National Rally in France, or Vox in Spain, i.e. all the right-wing and populist forces that are using russian money to change the political mainstream, to take over the power and state structures while the Left is on the sidelines.

I think this conflict will intensify, and the leftists and anarchists, especially in Europe, need to get involved in the current agenda. Perhaps it will be an unpleasant clash with reality, perhaps some idealistic views will be lost, but in an active struggle all beliefs are tested. Today, as the political discourse is shifting so strongly to the right, if we don't prepare for the future, I don't know what we can hope for.

Do you think an international anarchist or anti-authoritarian community can find common ground with us and move away from contradictions?

European activists should think about what will happen in 10–15 years and build their strategies based on that, because at the moment the society in Europe has shown itself to be immature. When we talk about Ukrainian society, we criticise the people who did not get involved in the conflict, but this criticism is rather mild. Meanwhile, in Europe, the policy of ignoring the war is the order of the day.

Anarchists who want to fight their states in Europe should consider two things. First of all, fight the russian shadow tanker fleet that helps russia and the capitalists trade oil to circumvent sanctions. Huge profits from the maritime trade in oil products are channelled by russia into war. Here, I would like to call particularly upon anarchists in Greece, who do not show any initiative to fight against the Greek commercial fleet, which serves russian oil interests and receives gigantic profits from the blood money.

Secondly, anarchists should research who next to them is pushing the russian agenda: usually it's far-right and anti-migrant movements, but sometimes russian secret services also masquerade as left-wing parties and media. The European rule of law is proving impotent in combating the russian influence that's undermining it. Anarchists should use all possible tactics to counter this. According to the New York Times, between 2014 and 2022, russia has invested at least \$300 million in European parties. We can already see the fruits of these investments in the rise of far-right parties loyal to russia in Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, and Austria.

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