

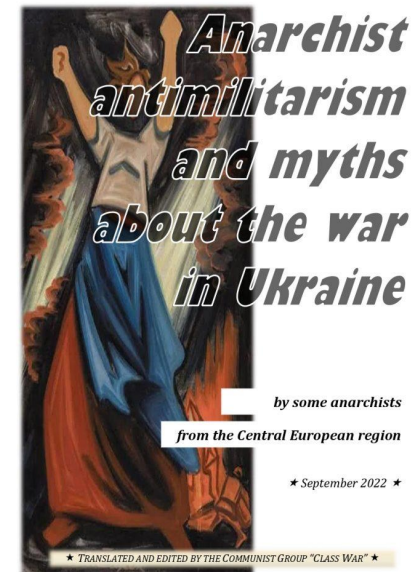
“On the contrary, the revolutionary communists and anarchists understand that imperialism is not the “highest stage of capitalism”, but one of its inherent and permanent characteristics as a world historical system; that every Nation-State is imperialist, but that there are hierarchies or different levels of imperialist power among the States; that imperialist war is a warlike competition between capitalist States with a higher level of imperialist power and, above all, a war of the international bourgeoisie against the international proletariat; that the enemy is not imperialism, but world capitalism; and, that the position of revolutionary communists and anarchists towards all imperialist war is not anti-imperialism and “national liberation”, but revolutionary defeatism, proletarian internationalism and worldwide social revolution.”³

“Anarchists do not fight to create or defend the sovereignty of states. We fight to dismantle the divisions, both material and ideological, that create them. In this spirit we take issue when, within our movements, it becomes challenging to distinguish the interests of US foreign policy and weapons manufacturers from our own. The dangers of reactionary and counter-revolutionary tendencies necessitate vigilance. We welcome the principled refusal to

³ Proletarios Revolucionarios, *On revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism in the current war between Russia and Ukraine/NATO*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarios-revolucionarios-on-revolutionary-defeatism-and-proletarian-internationalism-in-the-current-war-between-russia-and-ukraine-nato/>

Anarchist Antimilitarism and Myths About the War in Ukraine

Some Anarchists from the Central European
Region



September 2022

way as the Russian empire, but this still means that it exploits it for its imperial interests and that it wants to secure convenient access to resources on Ukrainian territory.

Here we see several imperial blocs waging a war for the redistribution of the territory and resources of the post-Soviet space. Some imperialists are doing this by direct military intervention in Ukraine, others by supplying arms to make the Ukrainian population on the front bleed for their cause.

Some anarchists go very far in their cynicism. They claim that “no NATO army is fighting in Ukraine”. In this way they are merely chewing the propaganda of the Western imperialists, masking the fact that NATO is fighting in Ukraine through the Ukrainian population, which it supplies with weapons from its own warehouses. If we see and condemn imperialist Russia, it should not be in a way where we support the imperialist West while hiding its imperialist nature, strategies and goals.

Support for the armed democratic movement in Ukraine is in reality support for Western imperialism with its Ukrainian government.

“The same Zapatistas rightly noted¹ at the very beginning of the war: “Big capital and its “Western” governments sat down to contemplate and even to accelerate the deterioration of the situation. Once the invasion had begun they were anxious to see whether Ukraine would resist and to calculate what they could get out of each possible outcome. Now that Ukraine is resisting they eagerly extend offers of “help” for which they will expect payment later.”²

¹ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2022/03/07/after-the-battle-no-landscape-will-remain/>

² *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

Myth 14: This is not a war of imperial blocs, but an invasion by a single empire that wants to subjugate its neighbors who have nothing to do with imperialism.

Seeing Putin's Russia as the sole imperial aggressor in this war is exactly what we are often accused of: trying to fit reality to our own ideological conclusions.

Apparently, imperialism is reduced by some to a tendency to exercise power by military invasion, brutal usurpation of the resources of the invaded and their violent subjugation. But imperialism has other expansion mechanisms than aggressive military invasion. Domination also takes the form of economic pressures or pressure on the political configuration of neighboring countries so that the political terrain is as favorable as possible to the interests of transnational economic actors. This is precisely what is happening when the imperial bloc represented by the US, the Western countries and the European Union supplies weapons and other war materials in order to secure an economic and political arrangement in Ukraine that leaves the door open for it to plunder local resources and favor economic activities.

At the moment, Western imperialism does not want to subjugate the Ukrainian population by military force, in the same

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“Some say Putin is innocent because NATO was infiltrating Russia’s borders; while others say the Ukrainian, European or American presidents are innocent because they are doing something against Putin’s action. (...)”

This war is not a war for the interests of the Russian workers or defending the interests of the Ukrainian workers. This war is not a war for the interests of any workers at all. It is a war against our interests. The current war between Russia and the other powers on Ukrainian soil is a reactionary and anti-worker war. We must all be against the war. We must not be just against Putin, not just against Biden and the European presidents, not just against the Ukrainian president. We workers, wage earners and toilers must be united against the war. We are against all you capitalists and warmongers. This is not our war. It is a war against all of us workers.”¹

“That “truth is the first casualty of war” is the first lie amongst many that accompany the slaughter of our class. For war to happen requires truth to have been well buried long in advance. The biggest lie, from which stem all others, is that we, the working class, the fodder of both wage labour and war, have any interests in common with those who order us to fight.”²

¹ No War but the Class War: Statements from the Haft Tappeh Workers (Iran): <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2022-03-05/no-war-but-the-class-war-statements-from-the-haft-tappeh-workers-iran/>

² ACG, The “Campaign for real war”: <https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/2022/03/29/the-campaign-for-real-war/>

The example of the industrial strike is irrelevant. For we have yet to see a capitalist competitor supplying a workers' strike patrol with weapons to defend itself against the employer's security guards, supplying a strike fund to enable the strike to continue, and making this support conditional on the fact that when the strike puts the existing owner on the chopping block, the company in which the strike is taking place will conveniently provide its products and resources to the competitor. If this kind of strike were to occur anywhere, we believe that workers would refuse to play the game of capitalist competitors and fight for their interests. Just as it would be a good thing to do in the case of the war in Ukraine.

That strikes will in some sense be used by capitalist competitors is a side effect, not the primary content of the strike struggle. In the case of the war in the Ukraine, the primary objective is to win resources for one or another bourgeois competitor, sacrificing mostly proletarian lives in the struggle. To achieve this sacrifice, the proletarians are mobilized for the struggle through nationalist ideology. If the struggle they undergo in doing so leads to the saving of some lives, this is a side effect of the main objective of the war, which is the redistribution of the territory and resources of the Ukraine between the capitalist competitors.

Let's recap. A bourgeois war and a workers' strike are two completely different kinds of conflict in terms of content. War pursues primarily bourgeois interests for which it mobilizes workers. A strike pursues primarily the interests of the workers, even if capitalist competitors try to wrest something from it for themselves. In a war, the resources for conflict are supplied by rival bourgeois factions; in a strike, the workers rely primarily on their own resources, because they have no reason to expect them from the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie has no reason to supply them, because it would risk them being directed against itself.

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Myth 13: Opposing the struggle of Ukrainian troops because it benefits Western elites is like opposing industrial strikes because they benefit capitalist competitors.

Let's imagine this hypothetical situation:

There are many companies competing on the world market, all trying to gobble up the next competitor in order to gain an advantage over all other competitors. At one point, one company attacks another in such an aggressive way that even its employees start dying. The surrounding companies supply the employees with weapons to defend the workplace against the aggressors, not primarily to save their bare lives, but to gain partial control over the workplace resources and the surviving employees who are so fiercely defending it with their lives by defeating the more aggressive competitor.

In such a case, who other than competing companies would have an interest in supplying weapons to the challenged company? After all, it is not in the interest of the workers to defend their employer's company in order to transfer part of the company's resources to another capitalist.

this not in the name of a monotonous pacifist view. They are against militarism first of all because they have a different conception of struggle. That is, they have nothing against weapons, they have nothing against the concept of defense from oppression. But, on the other hand, they have a lot against a certain use of arms, ordered and commanded by the state, and organized by repressive structures.”¹

[...]

Myth 30: *The statement “No war but class war” is an abstract and impractical slogan. It is useless to the bombed population.* 100

Myth 31: *The anti-militarist initiative must be aimed at defeating the militarism of the Russian army.* 102

¹ Alfredo Maria Bonanno, *Like a thief in the night*

Myth 12: The war has destabilized the Ukrainian State, opening up new possibilities for workers to defend their needs and interests.

Interestingly, this is often claimed by the same people who, in response to our criticism of anarchists in the State army, affirm that anarchists in the Ukrainian region cannot organize as autonomous non-hierarchical units because the Ukrainian State will not allow it and is not willing to give them resources.

If the State was truly destabilized, nothing would prevent people from taking autonomous initiative. Instead, we see the State trying to centrally control activities in the country and suppress expressions of autonomy. The talk of destabilizing the Ukrainian State reflects a wish rather than a reality. The arming of the Ukrainian population is subject to the control of the State, thereby ensuring that the armaments are not used against itself. This brings us back to why the defensive fighting of the Ukrainian troops must be seen as defense and strengthening of the role of the State, and not as mere protection of the bombed population.

“(...) anarchists are against militarism. There is no doubt about that. They are against militarism, and

Today, in the same way, many anarchist comrades do not stop at the unpardonable superficialities that can be read in some of our papers and reviews.”³

The Friends of the Class War’s Presentation

We consider the following text from the blog antimilitarism.noblogs.org to be one of the most important contributions of Czech anarchism against war and all warmongers, who, unfortunately, are also abundant in the anarchist movement.

The way how the text presents the various arguments against the myths about war that prevail in the anarchist movement and how it gathers them together into an organic complex of a revolutionary defeatist position, the vigor with which it opposes various pseudo-reasons why the anarchist movement should support war or one of the warring parties, the insistence with which it advocates the transformation of the imperialist conflict into a class conflict as the only possible path towards social revolution and therefore the only real peace, all of those makes out of it from our point of view a supremely important document of the contemporary revolutionary anti-war movement, even on an international scale.

However, we would construct some of the arguments and justified some of the positions somewhat differently, although with the same conclusion: war against war. We would like here to point out the ideological categorization remaining in the text according to which the dictatorship of Capital is articulated around the poles “democracy” versus “dictatorship” (cf. myths 10 and 29), a categorization which tends to elude the deep nature of the social dictatorship of Capital which is precisely and really democracy (i.e. ITS democracy!) as the negation of class antagonism and its conflictuality.

³ Alfredo Maria Bonanno, *Towards Anarchist Antimilitarism*: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-towards-anarchist-antimilitarism/>

Let us add to the text that the conflict lines of “critical” support for one of the warring parties versus revolutionary defeatism do not run only across the anarchist movement, although it is the anarchist movement that the text refers to. The same “myths”, the same attitudes and the same discussions can be found in the ultra-left camp all over the world. Even there, revolutionaries must define themselves against those “who are the first to issue countless proclamations and publications with anti-militarist themes at a time when the war is on the other side of the world, but when it comes to their doorstep, they start reproducing war propaganda”.

Therefore, together with the authors of the text, we must reaffirm over and over again “that being an antimilitarist made sense during WW1, just as it does in the case of the current war in Ukraine”.

base their peace propaganda on the fact that it is necessary at all costs to do everything possible to save the values of civilization, values which systematically come to be threatened by what is happening in the field of the adversary. (The adversary, in turn, acts and operates in the same way.) We must do everything to prevent war and often people end up convinced that doing everything can even mean going to war in order to avoid a greater catastrophe. At the outbreak of the first “world” war, Kropotkin, Grave, Malato and other illustrious anarchists reached the conclusion that it was necessary to participate in the war in order to defend democracy (in the first place French) under the threat of the central empires (Germany in the first place). This tragic error was possible and always will be so, because the same mistake as that which is being made today was made: they did not develop an anarchist analysis, but had faith in an anarchist re-elaboration of the analysis supplied by the intellectuals and divulgers in the service of the bosses. From that it was easy for them to reach the conclusion that, although war was still an immense and terrible tragedy, it was preferable to the more serious damage that might result from the victory of Teutonic militarism. Certainly not all anarchists were blind to the serious deviations of Kropotkin and comrades; Malatesta reacted violently, writing from London, but the damage done caused not inconsiderable consequences in the anarchist movement all over the world.

faction of the bourgeoisie but often in the naive belief that it is doing so for the benefit of its own lives.

“Suppose that Ukraine “wins” the war, what will the people there have gained? The “honor of the nation”? Freedom? After the war ends Zelensky and Ukraine’s own “oligarchs” will still be wealthy, but only deep misery awaits “ordinary” Ukrainians.

(...) The vast majority of the Ukrainian population was already poor and will be much poorer after the war. Its interests and those of the ruling class are not the same. Just like in Russia. In Ukraine, Russian and Ukrainian soldiers are killing each other for interests that are antagonistic to their own.”¹

“The capitulation of many socialists and anarchists to state nationalism during World War I and the subsequent damage to global class struggle remains one of the most tragic cautionary tales of modern history. The war divided radical leftists, socialists and anarchists of all stripes. No one tendency was united against the war. Rather, all opponents of imperialism and state nationalism were forced to attack pro-war elements within their own ranks. With the threat of another world war looming, we unfortunately find ourselves forced to do similar with many anarchists today.”²

“Those preparing for war are always the most impassioned propagandists of peace. Moreover, they

¹ Internationalist Perspective, *Don’t fight for “your” country!*: <https://internationalistperspective.org/dont-fight-for-your-country/>

² *No War But Class War: Against State Nationalism And Inter-Imperialist War In Ukraine*, text signed “Anarchists in Oakland, San Francisco, New York, and Pittsburgh”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/no-war-but-class-war-against-state-nationalism-and-inter-imperialist-war-in-ukraine/>

Introduction

“We anarchists, wherever we live and whatever our language, are in solidarity with exploited people wherever they are and those who live under the terrible conditions of war. We feel it is our duty to support and have solidarity with the civilian and the libertarian voices but not the political parties, governments and the states.”¹

This text is an attempt at a critical reflection on contemporary militaristic tendencies in the anarchist movement. At the same time, it presents antimilitarist perspectives as a way of coping with the war not only theoretically, but also to practically sabotage it. It is striking how many people claiming anarchism have embraced bourgeois-democratic propaganda with the outbreak of war in Ukraine and support the war mobilization coordinated by the Ukrainian State. We fully share the concern of anarchists in Oakland, San Francisco, New York and Pittsburgh who said in their statement, *“We have no desire to hear any more militarist calls for the escalation of inter-imperialist wars among anarchists.”* We are pleased that this indignant voice is also being heard from other parts of the world, including the regions of Central and Eastern Europe. The war propagandists try to make this voice invisible, to drown it out, to marginalize it, but it always resurfaces, as this contribution of ours shows.

¹ Kurdish-speaking Anarchist Forum (KAF), <https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/2019/10/20/kurdish-speaking-anarchist-forum-kaf-statement/>

“A conventional war of fronts between opposing armies (...) is the type of combat that states engage in and, requiring the replication of statist organisational forms, does not co-exist well with revolutionary struggle”, as stated by the group *Antagonism*² in one of its analyses. We agree and we want to develop our criticism towards those who support one of the warring parties in this spirit, without however losing sight of the people affected by the war.

Our reluctance to support any type of military and warfare is not a passive moralistic stance. Rejection is also an active involvement in forms of struggle other than military, which views problems from a class one and not a patriotic, nationalist or liberal democratic perspective. We do not give up support to people who are massacred, traumatized and deprived of their homes by war. We simply don't share the militaristic propaganda that passes off engaging in warfare as a constructive way of supporting these people. We do not encourage people not to resist imperialist aggression. But we are warning them that in war, it's always about fighting against some aggressors while taking side with others and supplying the means for future aggression. That's why we see the only way out in the transformation of the inter-imperialist war into a revolutionary struggle, i.e. class war.

In this text we try to clarify our arguments by polemically refuting the myths we read and hear when various people comment on the war in Ukraine. Sadly, these myths are fed by some of those who claim to be anarchists. On the other hand, it is gratifying to see that there are also some who share our antimilitarist, internationalist and revolutionary defeatist positions. We quote some of them in our paper to underline the

² See the introduction to the pamphlet *Olive-Drab Rebels – Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War*: <https://www.geocities.ws/antagonism1/olivedrab/intro2.html>

Myth 11: Anarchists are against wars, but this one is different from the others, so we must get involved.

What is interesting about this approach is that it can be seen in many military conflicts, although its proponents pretend that it is something unique. World War I and World War II, the various national liberation wars, and most recently the Rojava War. In all these wars, some anarchists come up with the same argument: we refuse to support the other wars, but this one is different and we must take the side of one of the warring parties. Each time they mention that this support is critical, although the longer the support lasts the more this critical nature disappears until finally we see only pure war propaganda, which glosses over certain aspects but conceals, ignores or downplays other very important ones.

So, is the war in Ukraine different from the others? Yes and no. Every war is different from others in some ways. Different actors, different places, different weapons, different ideological justifications. At the same time, all wars except class war are the same in their basic setting. It is always a fight between different power blocs in which the working class is fooled by different ideologies according to which it is in its interest to fight on one side or the other of the battle line. All wars – and the one in Ukraine is no exception – are the same in that the working class sacrifices its lives for the interests of this or that

We are not arguing that “Ukraine is a fascist state.” We are making an argument about the rising power of Ukraine’s far right movement (full of fascists and neo-Nazis), as it seems that the Ukrainian state is either unable or unwilling to do more than share power with it. This power-sharing is evident, not only in the far right’s presence within the state and on the streets, but also in the state’s attempt to legislate history through “decommunization laws” passed in the spring of 2015.”¹

fact that antimilitarism is still relevant today and is not just the outdated view of long-dead anarchist theorists.

**Some Anarchists From The Central European Region
(September 2022)**

“No battle can be won in the study, and theory without practice is dead.” [Immanuel Kant]

¹ *No War But Class War: Against State Nationalism And Inter-Imperialist War In Ukraine*, text signed “Anarchists in Oakland, San Francisco, New York, and Pittsburgh”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/no-war-but-class-war-against-state-nationalism-and-inter-imperialist-war-in-ukraine/>

Myth 1: We are not fighting for the State, but in defense of the people under the fire of the imperial army.

It is interesting how the argumentation supporting military mobilization is gradually changing, even though the content is still the same. First, we heard that anarchists in the Ukrainian army are only protecting civilian lives, but are not defending any State. After a few weeks, there was already talk of a temporary tactical alliance with the forces of the State, without which it was said that it would be impossible to protect the civilian population. Now they are again openly talking about fighting for liberal democracy, that is, for a particular form of State.

All these formulations are intended to convince us that it is possible to wage a bourgeois war coordinated by State structures, but avoid strengthening these structures and thereby not waging a struggle for the interests of the bourgeoisie. It is always necessary to see what is actually happening, which in some cases is not the same as what the direct participants or observers claim about what is happening. The anarchists in the Ukrainian army units are effectively fighting for the State and their claim that this is not happening does not correspond to reality. It comes across more as a desperate attempt to cope with contradictions, or worse, to give the impression that there are in fact no contradictions.

“For those of us who have been in life or death conflicts with “American” neo-Nazis who have traveled to Ukraine to train, it has been infuriating to see the contortions that some anarchists will twist themselves into to downplay the dominance of fascists and neo-Nazis there. Ukraine’s far right movement has been institutionalized within Ukrainian government. Neo-Nazi battalions have been incorporated, fully intact, into the country’s armed forces. Fascist militias have formed street patrols contracted by municipal governments in the capital and other major cities. Former leaders and members of neo-Nazi militias and paramilitary groups have established themselves as “civic activists,” taking advantage of the liberal obsession with abstract “human rights” discourse to make inroads into Ukraine’s “third sector” as a legitimate interest group. With its access to weapons, infrastructure built up over many years, and various sources of private, state, and city funding, the Ukrainian far right’s formal (but not total) integration with the state affords it power and influence unrivaled in the context of the global far right.

That Ukraine’s far right has gained little in terms of parliamentary representation belies the movement’s growing presence and power, not only within organs of the state, but also in the streets. As Volodymyr Ishchenko, a sociologist at Kyiv’s Polytechnic Institute, has said: “Electorally they are weak, but in extra-parliamentary terms, they are among the strongest groups in civil society. The far right dominates the street. They have the strongest street movement in Europe.” The significance of this street dominance should be clear to anarchists (...)

Myth 10: Support for the Ukrainian population is often denied, on the basis of the presence of far-right forces, which are not that strong in the country.

The reason for not getting involved in the war on the Ukrainian side should not be motivated by the mere presence of neo-Nazis and neo-fascists in Ukraine. We have completely different reasons for not supporting the war. At the same time, however, we are struck by how the same people who present the war as a fight for democracy against dictatorship also downplay the Ukrainian far right. Even before the war, the latter had a strong influence on the political direction of the country towards more totalitarian forms. Why should we believe that after the war this force and tendency will disappear to be replaced by a free alternative?

It is not good to downplay the problem of the far right in Ukraine with figures or by pointing to its weak representation in parliament, because it is clear that neo-fascist and neo-Nazi forces have the upper hand here, especially in the streets. This is being used by parliamentary forces to turn the course of government policy towards more authoritarian forms.

“We consider the participation of anarchists in this war as part of the armed formations operating in Ukraine, a break with the idea and cause of anarchism. These formations are not independent, they are subordinated to the Ukrainian army and carry out the tasks set by the authorities. No programs or social demands are put forward in them. Hopes of carrying out anarchist agitation among them are doubtful. There is no social revolution defended in Ukraine. In other words, those people who call themselves anarchists are simply sent to “defend the fatherland” and the state, playing the role of cannon fodder for Capital and strengthening nationalist and militarist sentiments among the masses.”¹

“It should be noted that different Ukrainian anarchists joined the army for different reasons. Black Flag rather tried to promote the anarchist agenda in the ranks of the military and broader defense movement. We consider their experience valuable, although unsuccessful, and assumptions about this were expressed by us in an interview² from the first days of the war. Others, on the contrary, rather protect the Ukrainian state from attacks by anarchists – therefore, we treat them as negatively as we treat the state as such.

In words all of them are not for the state, but only for the Ukrainian people, however even such Jesuit rhetoric they cannot use in a revolutionary way. If you want help the Armed Forces, many of

¹ *War in Ukraine: An Internationalist Voice from Russia*, English translation: <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2022/03/24/war-in-ukraine-an-internationalist-voice-from-russia/>

² <https://libcom.org/article/invasion-ukraine-anarchist-media-call-kharkov/>

whose soldiers don't even have body armor, not to mention other ammunition – okay, help them, make useful contacts for the post-war time, as Malatesta supported the Cuban rebels against Spain and the Libyan ones against Italy... But why even Zelensky's right-wing opponents are not shy to use every case of such injustice to undermine trust in the Ukrainian authorities, while they, on the contrary, only advocate Ukrainian state interests in the libertarian circles? Those who don't want to obey any government have no reasons to see such groups as a real alternative to it, and those who love the state don't need such schizophrenic exoticism – there are ordinary nationalist parties and movements for them.”³

³ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

“(...) the Ukrainian State is not “better”, “less bad”, neither more nor less “fascist” or democratic than the Russian State, since it does not differ qualitatively but only quantitatively from the latter, being smaller and with less imperialist power, but equally bourgeois and anti-proletarian (...)”³

“As for the collectives you mentioned, their lamentations about “free Ukraine defending the entire civilized world” are too boring to even waste time on their analysis. For those who are very worried about the Ukrainian democracy from abroad, we can only advise to renounce their European/American citizenship, apply for Ukrainian resident card and quickly move to here for delights of life!”⁴

“As social-revolutionary proletarians, communists, anarchists..., we have absolutely no material interest in siding in any way with the capitalist State and its democracy, whatever it looks like, with our class enemies, with our exploiters, with those who have always harshly given us back “bullets, machine guns and prison” when we struggle and take to the streets to claim our humanity.”⁵

³ Proletarios Revolucionarios, *On revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism in the current war between Russia and Ukraine/NATO*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarios-revolucionarios-on-revolutionary-defeatism-and-proletarian-internationalism-in-the-current-war-between-russia-and-ukraine-nato/>

⁴ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

⁵ Class War, *Internationalist Manifesto against capitalist war and peace in Ukraine...*: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/internationalist-manifesto-against-capitalist-war-and-peace-in-ukraine/>

the blood of thousands of people while justifying this by that very flawed analysis.

Fighting for liberal democracy on the grounds that we will have better terrain of struggle is like risking your life on a lottery bet in which there is the possibility of a big win, but there is nothing to eliminate the high risk of a tragic loss like death.

“Of what use to the dead proletarians is the democratic terrain?”, the *Proletarchiv* project aptly points out.

“In order to understand how some see militarism as justified for the defense of Ukrainian “democracy,” we have to address the tendency among anarchists and Leftists that is, implicitly or explicitly, partisan to Western liberal democracy. This tendency rests on the belief that the conditions of capitalist class rule afforded by liberal democracy are more favorable to liberatory struggle. However, this involves a progressivist view of history that forecloses on the very possibility of anarchy. Anarchy is the inseparability of means and ends. As the comrades wrote in At Daggers Drawn:

“Liquidating the lie of the transitional period (dictatorship before communism, power before freedom, wages before taking the lot, certainty of the results before taking action, requests for financing before expropriation, ‘ethical banks’ before anarchy, etc.) means making the revolt itself a different way of conceiving relations.”

There is no path “from democracy to freedom.” True collective liberation has only antagonism for liberal democracy.”²

² *No War But Class War: Against State Nationalism And Inter-Imperialist War In Ukraine*, text signed “Anarchists in Oakland, San Francisco, New York, and Pittsburgh”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/no-war-but-class-war-against-state-nationalism-and-inter-imperialist-war-in-ukraine/>

Myth 2: Without military operations, it would be impossible to protect the lives of the Ukrainian population and resist the Russian empire.

It is perfectly legitimate to protect the lives of the people of bombed-out cities. But to do so in the form of conventional warfare is effectively to protect the integrity of one State or another. Moreover, it is questionable to claim that it is in this way that the maximum number of lives can be saved. Continued war mobilization leads to the progressive brutalization of war and the death toll rises. At the same time, staying in bombing sites increases the risk of death. Moreover, it is possible to stop the bombing in other ways than by sending one’s own troops to the front.

The Ukrainian army has chosen a frontal military confrontation, which by its very nature cannot take place without people dying in large numbers. Not engaging in a warlike form of combat, however, does not mean sacrificing the population exposed to the bombs, because it is not simply a matter of refusing to fight, but also of organizing non-warlike forms of protection of threatened lives. Some organize the movement of the most endangered people to safe places. Others are attacking the economic, political and military power of the Russian empire, often doing so from various locations around the world.

The effects of militaristic propaganda are devastating. Some people came to really believe that State-led war is the most appropriate way to save lives, and moreover, in their view, the only way.

“We refuse to enter into this deadly logic and we stand with all the courageous opponents who in Russia and Belarus, despite the brutal police repression, oppose this warlike madness.

We are in solidarity with all desertions and we call on Europe to open its borders to all those who flee or refuse to participate in the war.”¹

“Oh, comprehensive coverage of anti-war boycott, sabotage and other direct action is the main topic of our English international rubric² since the first days of the full-scale invasion! Along with this, we should understand that the national unity of Ukrainians around Zelensky’s power rests only on fear of an external threat. Therefore, anti-war subversive acts in Russia are indirectly a threat to the Ukrainian ruling class as well, and that is why we consider its informational support to be an internationalist act.”³

¹ « Paix aux chaumières, Guerre aux Palais ! » [“Peace to the huts, war to the palaces!”] [In French]: http://cnt-ait.info/2022/03/08/paix_huttes_fr/

² <https://libcom.org/tags/assemblyorgua/>

³ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

Myth 9: An open dictatorship is a less favorable terrain for self-organization than the liberal democracy for which Ukraine is fighting.

This claim is purely speculative. It cannot be shown that the working class will organize more and better on democratic terrain than on non-democratic terrain. If such speculative reasoning is acceptable in the context of discussion, it cannot be accepted as a justification for the self-sacrifice of the working class for war. As the *Proletarchiv* project clearly said, “*The proletariat in the Czech Republic has not been able to use the terrain of democracy for the last 30 years and in Ukraine the proletariat should die for the supposed democratic terrain (pure ideological idea).*”¹

In the world we can see various more or less democratic or authoritarian terrains. In some places the class struggle is in decline or stagnating, in others it is developing in quality and quantity. To conclude that the struggles are declining automatically in dictatorships while rising in democracies is very inaccurate. In the debate, such a position is just the result of a flawed analysis. On the ground, however, it means shedding

¹ Proletarchiv, *Critical commentary on the political orientation of the text from Kolektivně proti Kapitálu – Mouvement Communiste*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/no-war-but-class-war/>

“Putin did not invade Ukraine for the benefit of Russian workers. Neither the United States, nor Europe, nor NATO have stationed troops under Russia’s nose in the interests of the Ukrainian workers or the interests of the European and American workers. The expansion of NATO to Ukraine, or anywhere else, is capitalist militarism and hostile to the interests of workers. Just as the Russian military offensive is capitalist militarism and against all workers. The NATO presence in Ukraine, or Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, are plans that end in favour of the world’s capitalists. The blood and lives of ordinary people are being lost. Our homes are being ruined, but they are making their profits.”³

“If we compare the government-controlled part of Ukraine with the EU countries... Believe it or not, even the historic downtown of a typical Ukrainian city, including ours, may be a much less habitable thing than the Western slums. We have nothing to defend here, except for the thrones of authorities and the fields of corporations. That’s why our officials are so afraid of the free departure: army service to defend the plantations of the oligarchy is not the most desirable option for many soldiers but the single available income in such conditions.”⁴

³ No War but the Class War: Statements from the Haft Tappeh Workers (Iran): <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2022-03-05/no-war-but-the-class-war-statements-from-the-haft-tappeh-workers-iran/>

⁴ Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

Myth 3: The Russian Empire can only be defeated by military force.

The stability of an empire is not only guaranteed by military superiority, but above all by the economic base on which the military machinery depends. The other pillars are the political structures and the prevailing ideology of the ruling class.

The Russian empire seeks the most favorable conditions in international trade and geopolitical influence. In this respect, its power grows throughout the world, not just in the regions of the Russian Federation. People do not need to be on the war front to undermine the basis of the empire. For example, the bombers of the Russian military can be stopped by cutting off the resources they need to operate. Resources can be expropriated, destroyed, disabled, or blocked from moving. There are many possibilities.

“Nationalism and armaments are never emancipatory social responses, especially not in these circumstances. They provide no perspective beyond misery; on the contrary, they perpetuate and deepen it. We reject the militarization of public discourse and rearmament. We do not hope for more armaments, which only promote capitalist competition, global arms races and regional conflicts. Our per-

spective is desertion and dismantling of all war equipment.”¹

“It isn’t a question of how a chaotic and rebellious civilian populace can out-gun the well-organised, disciplined armies of the capitalist state in pitched battle, but of how a mass movement can cripple the effective fighting capacity of the military from within, and bring about the collapse and dispersal of the state’s armed forces.”²

“(…) after the Russian troops mostly lost their offensive potential, a wave of social discontent began to show up in Ukraine as well (…)”³

“The more important question for us as revolutionaries and internationalists, is how do we as workers spread opposition to this war and show solidarity with those from our class under fire to die for the vested interest of capital? Defeatism is not pacifism, it can’t afford to be – it is an active defence of community and resistance to the idea of a capitalist victory or a capitalist peace.

A peace they envisage, if and when the arms industry and capital allow it to happen, is already

¹ *Solidarita sdezertérmi a emancipačnými protestnými hnutiami!* [Solidarity with deserters and protest movements for emancipation!] [in Slovak]: <https://zdola.org/solidarita-s-dezertermi-a-emancipacnymi-protestnymi-hnutiami/>

² *Harass the Brass; Some notes toward the subversion of the US armed forces*, text published in the pamphlet *Olive-Drab Rebels – Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War*, by Antagonism: <https://www.geocities.ws/antagonism1/olivedrab/harass2.html>

³ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

against everything Ukrainian, the “small suffering democratic victim” keeps most of the population as hostages to show more bloody pictures abroad demanding more money, also robbing its serfs by all available means, while not a single Russian missile has yet flown into the government quarter – is quite close to those who have nothing to defend in this bleak hole with no clear future.”¹

“We are not experts in geopolitics, not even amateurs; we are not experts in energy, industrial or agricultural reserves. In fact, we are experts in virtually nothing, only in our job and at work as the laborers we are. And that is precisely what gives us the legitimacy to denigrate the war waged against us as rooted we are in the reality of working-class people. Because this, even if they tell us otherwise, is not about the homeland, or even historical territories, it is about capitalism and the exacerbated hatred of this system against the people, a hatred stemming from the desire to make more and more money and achieve more and more power.

*They can tell us that one or the other is the bad guy, but the reality is much simpler: the reality is again what the working class suffers from, regardless of their nationality: death, suffering, exile...”*²

¹ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

² *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo / CNT-IWA, No a la guerra, no al militarismo. Contra todo imperialismo. Ni Putin, ni Biden* [No to War, No to Militarism. Against all Imperialisms. Neither Putin nor Biden], [in Spanish]: <https://bajocincaibertario.blogspot.com/2022/02/no-la-guerra-no-al-militarismo-contra.html>

But to put our lives on the line in defense of such places seems to us an unreasonable sacrifice, especially when we know that it is mainly a defense of the capitalists' property, in the management of which the workers have a negligible share.

Other defended facilities are industrial, manufacturing and warehouse buildings, as well as agricultural fields, mining and construction companies. Although these are the places where capital retains the exploited class, already long before the war many Ukrainian workers fled from them to other countries in search of a better life. What interest do workers have in defending these places directly linked to their misery, places where they are exploited, humiliated and exhausted?

The war is also aimed at defending the existing political and economic system, that is, the particular capitalist form that depends on the exploitation of workers and the domination of the State over the population. This war aims at nothing else than capitalist functioning and it is not in the interest of the workers to shed their own blood in defense of such a system.

We are not saying that Ukrainian workers cannot save anything that is meaningful to them by waging war. It's just that we see that war is much more focused on protecting bourgeois property and privilege, as well as the infrastructure of State power. And this is not really in the interest of the workers. We say yes to defending the lives and personal backgrounds of the working class. We say no to dying and getting maimed in defense of bourgeois property and privilege. In the case of the war in Ukraine, it is primarily the latter that is being defended.

“Fortunately or unfortunately, we are the only anarchist collective in Ukraine whose fame has grown significantly during these 6 terrible months. Probably, because we give useful information for workers in their daily confrontation with bosses or officials, and our position with the condemnation of both warring states – the aggressor commits open genocide

being pre-defined as a frozen or ongoing attritional conflict. A relentless profitable mill, grinding the bodies of workers to feed the power of the Western-backed millionaire Zelensky and the cleptocratic dictator Putin.”⁴

⁴ Anarchist Communist Group (ACG), *No War! No Peace!*: <https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/2022/06/08/no-war-no-peace/>

Myth 4: Ukraine's population is under fire from a well-armed Russian army, so defense will not be possible without armament support from NATO and European Union governments.

The military invasion of Putin's imperialism can and must be fought by means other than war. The problem with the pro-war argument is that it reduces defense against imperial aggression to only one option, and that is the riskiest one: a frontal military confrontation. It takes no account whatsoever of the possibility to disintegrate military forces from within directly by those who are recruited for the purposes of war. In all wars, sooner or later there are not only desertion tendencies, but also various kinds of sabotage by ordinary soldiers who have simply stopped believing that there is any legitimate reason for their deployment. The sabotage that occurs does not require expensive resources or heavy weapons. Yet their destructive effects can disable monstrous military machineries or significantly delay the advance of army units. These sabotages are so easy to carry out precisely because they are performed directly by members of military units, who usually have relatively easy ac-

Myth 8: By getting involved in the war on the Ukrainian side, the interests of the working class in the Ukrainian region are defended.

Let us ask ourselves what the military operations actually save. We have already mentioned the problematic nature of the claim that it is about human lives. Next, we could deal with the material facilities that are destroyed by shelling and bombing. For those working in Ukraine, these are mainly houses, apartments, cultural centers, shops, the infrastructure of urban transport and other services. All of this is mostly owned by the bourgeoisie or the State and is used to accumulate profits extracted from the workers who use them. Even if all of this serves in part to meet the needs of the workers, it is done on the basis of exploitative principles.

We are sympathetic to situations where militiamen in the Spanish Civil War fought to save buildings and infrastructure under workers' control. But why should workers in Ukraine die fighting to save bourgeois property and territory administered by the State? The workers of Ukraine own and manage only a tiny percentage of local wealth. We believe that international solidarity can provide adequate compensation for the facilities taken from the workers by the war. We understand how hard it is to give up what we see as our home and favorite places.

“The horror of war projected from afar inevitably produces waves of anger, sympathy, compassion, and a sense of helplessness which is itself exploited by our bosses and their states to channel any possible awakening resistance into the dead end of charity. They manipulate us into false partisan choices in favour of one belligerent or the other. This is the true fog of war seeking to blind us from the what should be the obvious – The bosses on both sides are our enemy as the workers of both suffer and die awaiting our class solidarity in action.”³

³ ACG, *Revolutionary Defeatism:* <https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/2022/06/12/revolutionary-defeatism/>

cess to vulnerable points in war equipment and infrastructure. Sometimes a single nut thrown into the drive train is enough.

The problem remains that too much effort is spent on war propaganda that portrays all Russian soldiers as fanatical supporters of the Putin regime. Although information is leaking out about Russian soldiers who no longer want to go to war, very little resources are devoted to agitation and networking to encourage them to desert and sabotage the war effort. If there are countless initiatives to support civilian refugees, there should be enough to provide security for deserters and saboteurs. As long as the spirit of war propaganda views all soldiers as loyal foot soldiers of the State, there will be little incentive for rank-and-file soldiers to sabotage.

We can look at the example of the Makhnovists, who conducted agitation in the ranks of the opposing armies (both white and red), thereby increasing the frequency of desertions, defections, fraternizations, sabotages, or turning the guns of the rank and file against the officers. The ease and effectiveness of internal sabotage tactics is illustrated by the example of sabotage in the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.

Let's quote again the text "Harass the Brass":

“Sabotage was an extremely useful tactic. On May 26, 1970, the USS Anderson was preparing to steam from San Diego to Vietnam. But someone had dropped nuts, bolts and chains down the main gear shaft. A major breakdown occurred, resulting in thousands of dollars worth of damage and a delay of several weeks. Several sailors were charged, but because of a lack of evidence the case was dismissed. With the escalation of naval involvement in the war the level of sabotage grew. In July of 1972, within the space of three weeks, two of the Navy's aircraft carriers were put out of commission by

sabotage. On July 10, a massive fire swept through the admiral's quarters and radar centre of the USS Forrestal, causing over \$7 million in damage. This delayed the ship's deployment for over two months. In late July, the USS Ranger was docked at Alameda, California. Just days before the ship's scheduled departure for Vietnam, a paint-scraper and two 12-inch bolts were inserted into the number-four-engine reduction gears causing nearly \$1 million in damage and forcing a three-and-a-half-month delay in operations for extensive repairs. The sailor charged in the case was acquitted. In other cases, sailors tossed equipment over the sides of ships while at sea.”¹

“(...) but NATO is not concerned with more or less freedoms for the Ukrainian population, but with geopolitical lines of defense, markets and spheres of influence, and for these it will be willing to invest billions of euros and munitions.”²

¹ *Harass the Brass; Some notes toward the subversion of the US armed forces*, text published in the pamphlet *Olive-Drab Rebels – Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War*, by Antagonism: <https://www.geocities.ws/antagonism1/olivedrab/harass2.html>

² *Against war and military mobilization: preliminary notes on the invasion of Ukraine*, published in the pamphlet *War Against War – Anarchist and internationalist perspectives*: https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/war-against-war_a4.cleaned.pdf

trating to see anarchists pouring resources into the military rather than into activities that sabotage, block and undermine the war.

“(...) the number of the Ukrainian army is approaching a million people, and a few dozen fighters under black flags are a drop in the ocean, unable to demonstrate anything but their own futility and helplessness.”¹

“Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a war of aggression that is a continuation of Russia’s authoritarian domestic policies and seeks to seize power that is ideologically linked to pre-Soviet, tsarist times. The war is also part of the capitalist competition for hegemony, market shares and spheres of influence between the global power blocs of Russia, China, the US and the EU.

NATO’s geostrategic objectives are also guided by this competitive logic. It is an international military alliance that promotes its own interests. Ultimately, it is a military alliance of States, not a democratic institution of “freedom” as it is currently declared. There were and are no “humanitarian” wars. There are only wars. And at this level of conflict, social movements can only lose. Their main enemy is therefore always in their own country.”²

¹ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

² *Solidarita sdezertérmi a emancipačnými protestnými hnutiami!* [Solidarity with deserters and protest movements for emancipation!] [in Slovak]: <https://zdola.org/solidarita-s-dezertermi-a-emancipacnymi-protestnymi-hnutiami/>

Myth 7: The involvement of the Ukrainian population in the war was forced by the invasion of Russian troops.

The Ukrainian population had a choice, but some chose the option of joining the war by entrenching themselves and defending the territory. No one made the decision for these people. The choice is related to the strong patriotic and nationalistic tendency of the Ukrainian population, rather than being forced by circumstances or in the absence of any other option. In short, Ukrainian nationalists prefer to choose dying patriotically on the war front rather than waging a less risky but effective struggle from positions outside the “homeland” or inside the country but otherwise than by frontal military confrontation.

Instead of a military defeat requiring too many casualties, a different resistance against the empire can be organized with fewer casualties. We can resist without dying needlessly on the war front.

We read reports about how much money the anarchists have raised to buy military equipment for Ukrainian soldiers. We ask ourselves how many successful direct actions against the war could have been carried out if these funds had not been swallowed up by the war machinery? Even from places as far from the front as Dresden, for example, it is possible to strike blows at the Russian army, economy and bureaucracy. It is frus-

Myth 5: Anarchists in Ukraine cannot fight except by joining the army because there is no mass workers’ movement with the means and capacity to organize itself in an anarchist way.

According to this logic, we could argue that workers everywhere should go to the polls, join parliamentary parties, and ask the police and the courts to resolve disputes with employers until they have the capacity to oppose the whole bourgeois democratic system with their own forms of mass organization. This is nonsense. It is similar to being told that we must ally ourselves with the State in Ukraine today so we can fight it later.

In fact, the power imbalance between the State and the workers exists even in countries where there is a mass working class movement. Anarchists cannot wait for the balance of power to tip in their favor. It is precisely by fighting every day outside the structures of the State and in spite of them that they can change the balance of power. By contrast, relying on alliances with the State helps to consolidate the position of the latter. Moreover, this is done with the help of those who may even oppose it, but only rhetorically, not practically.

Anarchists have always argued that the means must correspond to the ends. Non-State goals cannot be achieved through State structures. A mass movement cannot be built by exhorting workers to ally themselves with the organs of the State, because by doing so they will learn to accept and support these organs rather than to define themselves against them and subvert them. With every alliance with the State, the workers gradually cripple the tendency to rely on their own strength and resources. They lose the belief that they can achieve anything by self-organization and thus feed the belief that they are powerless without the help of the State.

The next chapter could then be a list of all the concessions that we would have to make in order for such an alliance to take place, whereas the State makes only a minor concession in the sense of “I’ll tolerate you temporarily”. But it gives no guarantee that when, with the help of the anarchists, it achieves its goals, this concession will not turn into a tendency of “I don’t need you anymore. So as potential opponents I can and want to eliminate you now.”

“Putin is trying to extend his autocratic rule, crushing any movement of resistance or rebellion both inside and outside of their borders. But now, when all Western democrats sing the defense of freedom and peace in chorus, this is an orchestrated hypocrisy: these are the same democrats whose “peace operations”, aka. wars of aggression, drones, bombs and occupations enforce colonial relations of power and exploitation, supply dictators and torturers with weapons and are directly or indirectly responsible for massacres of refugees and insurgents.”¹

¹ *Against war and military mobilization: preliminary notes on the invasion of Ukraine*, published in the pamphlet *War Against War – Anarchist*

tributors of a humanitarian maximalism which can be shared by all (...)⁴

⁴ Alfredo Maria Bonanno, *Towards Anarchist Antimilitarism*, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-towards-anarchist-antimilitarism/>

“If Ukrainian anarchists now choose to defend themselves with guns in hand – themselves and those close to them, not the Ukrainian state – then we stand in solidarity with them. But an anarchist position against war, even against an imperialist war of aggression, must not degenerate into defending a state and its democracy or becoming a pawn of it. We do not choose the side of the lesser evil or that of the more democratic rulers, because these same democracies are also only interested in the expansion of their own power and are also built on repression and imperialism.”²

“The anarchists are not against militarism because they are all pacifists. They do not object to the symbol of the gun, nor can they accept a condemnation of armed struggle in general, to use that strictly technical term which would deserve extended consideration. On the contrary, they are in complete agreement with a certain use of weapons.”³

“To analyze to the extreme consequences our effective possibility of struggle does not at all mean to take a distance from the problem of war, and we shall be able to give a far more precise and meaningful response, a far more detailed indication and project of intervention, than what is happening at the present time, which sees us only as suppliers of rehashed theories of the bourgeoisie and vulgar dis-

² *Against war and military mobilization: preliminary notes on the invasion of Ukraine*, published in the pamphlet *War Against War – Anarchist and internationalist perspectives*: https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/war-against-war_a4.cleaned.pdf

³ Alfredo M. Bonanno, *Like a thief in the night*

“Examples of practical activity that anarchists can undertake against war consist of combating pro-war propaganda, industrial action, sabotage, refugee support, mutual aid, and the struggle against the system of immigration controls that prevent people from leaving war-zones to settle wherever they please, instead forcing them to rely on human-traffickers.”²

and internationalist perspectives: https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/war-against-war_a4.cleaned.pdf

² Craftwork, *Anarchism, nationalism, war, and peace*: <https://libcom.org/article/anarchism-nationalism-war-and-peace/>

Myth 6: By not taking part in the war, the working class abandons the weapons it can use to defend itself.

To refuse to support the bourgeois war doesn't mean to surrender. But it is important to answer the strategic question of against whom and how to use the weapons? In this war they are being used against a currently more aggressive imperial bloc in defense of another imperial bloc. The working class is being dragged into the war while suffering the greatest losses. Such use of arms is counterproductive.

But if the guns are turned against the bourgeoisie, the military officers or the structures of State power (Russian as well as Ukrainian), we have no problem with that. Fortunately, we can also see such cases on both sides of the war line. If the working class is to shed its blood, it is only for its own interests, which is not the same as bleeding for the fatherland, the nation, democracy or bourgeois wealth.

The Ukrainian State makes sure that the armed forces are under the central command of its authorities and army, to which are submitted even those "anarchists" who have fallen headlong into militaristic tendencies. It can be assumed that even if the Russian army is militarily defeated, the Ukrainian State will seek to disarm the population which it is now arming under the watchful eye of the State authorities. In the past, whenever a State allowed anarchists to arm themselves

to a greater extent, it later did everything possible to disarm them. Anarchists have more than once played the role of useful idiots who first fought for the interests of the State and the bourgeoisie, which they erroneously defined as the interests of the working class, only to end up, after fighting their battles, in prisons and torture chambers, before the courts and on the execution grounds of the very institutions that supplied them with arms.

"Faced with the horrors of war, it is very easy to make a mistake and impotently call for peace. However, capitalist peace is not peace. Such "peace" is in fact a differently branded war against the working class. In this situation, a consistent anti-militarist position implies making direct efforts to stop the capitalist war (...).

As the task of all revolutionaries in the times of capitalist wars is to fight against their ruling class and its militaristic crimes, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative will continue to focus in this context on resisting all imperial and capitalist forces in Serbia, of which NATO currently has the strongest influence. We will also fight against all attempts to abandon neutral status and take sides in wars waged against peoples everywhere.

*At the same time, we call on the soldiers of all warring parties to reject the commands of their officers and disable the administration of all capitalist armies. We call on the inhabitants of the warring states to oppose the war, and sabotage the war efforts of "their" states as much as possible."*¹

¹ Anarcho-syndicalist Initiative (ASI-IWA) [Serbia], *Let's turn capitalist wars into a workers' revolution!*: <https://iwa-ait.org/content/lets-turn-capitalist-wars-workers-revolution/>

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*stand on any side of a war between imperialist states (...)*⁴

Some Anarchists from the Central European Region
Anarchist Antimilitarism and Myths About the War in
Ukraine
September 2022

Retrieved on 2022-10-18 from
autistici.org/tridnivalka/antimilitarismus-anarchist-antimilitarism-and-myths-about-the-war-in-ukraine
Source in Czech: antimilitarismus.noblogs.org. English
translation: *The Friends Of The Class War*.

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⁴ *No War But Class War: Against State Nationalism And Inter-Imperialist War In Ukraine*, text signed “Anarchists in Oakland, San Francisco, New York, and Pittsburgh”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/no-war-but-class-war-against-state-nationalism-and-inter-imperialist-war-in-ukraine/>

Myth 15: The analysis of anarchists and leftists, especially in the West, is short-sighted because they see imperialism only in the US, NATO and its allies, not in Russia.

We are sure that all those who criticize the support given to the Ukrainian army do not overlook Russia's imperial position. We also know for sure that some people, in turn, see imperialism only on the Russian side. They do not acknowledge its existence on the Western side, or they downplay it by saying that Western imperialism is not manifesting itself in this conflict in the invasive and domineering way that Russia is. We have already noted that Western imperialism is, in fact, expansionist, like Russia's one, but that it pursues its interests indirectly by supporting the Ukrainian army, which is fighting battles for its interests.

If it is myopic to see imperialism only on the side of the US and its allies, we should measure those who see imperialism only in Russia by the same yardstick. Our refusal to support the war does not consist in denying Russia's imperial role, nor in demonizing the imperial role of "the West". We refuse to support all imperial powers. We refuse to see the empire only

on one side of the battle line, because we see it in every State that supports the war and thereby pursues its own imperial interests above all. Yes, we see differences in the degree of brutality used by each State. However, this is a reflection of their current capacities, which is a variable. States that are less aggressive now because they are pushed on the defensive may become as brutal as Russia tomorrow if they lack the means to do so at present. Anyone who chooses to support one empire in war against another should be aware that in doing so he is providing the weakest empire with the means for future aggression.

“We recognize no justification for this war, which the working class – in Russia and Ukraine – can only suffer from.

The reaction to Russian imperialism and to the interests of its oligarchic elite, to the brutal bombing of civilians and the exhausting war has been the rise of nationalist and militarist sentiments. Fearing for their lives and safety, many are oblivious to the crimes of imperialism as long as it is “our” imperialism. Many are willing to accept the presence of neo-Nazis as long as they are “our” neo-Nazis. If such fear is understandable – its effect can only be to strengthen pro-war sentiment and permanently reinforce the authoritarianism of the authorities, with disastrous consequences for the working class.”¹

“Their interests! Our dead! We do not take a stand for any of the States in conflict, whether one is categorized according to the dominant bourgeois political morality as “the aggressor” and the other as “the aggressed” or vice versa. Their respective interests at

¹ *Przeciw wojnie!* [Against War!] by Union of Polish Syndicalists ZSP – Warsaw [in Polish]: <https://zsp.net.pl/przeciw-wojnie/>

stake are exclusively theirs and in total opposition to those of the exploited class, that is, us proletarians; this is why, outside and against all nationalism, all patriotism, all regionalism, all localism, all particularism, we affirm loud and clear our internationalism!

The proletariat, as a revolutionary class, does not show any neutrality towards any of its exploiters who confront each other in the redistribution of their market shares, but on the contrary, it equally rejects them as two sides of the same reality, the world of exploitation of one class by another, and it expresses its deep solidarity with all the sectors of our class that are undergoing the multiplied assaults of one or the other of its historical enemies.”²

² Class War, *Internationalist Manifesto against capitalist war and peace in Ukraine...*: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/internationalist-manifesto-against-capitalist-war-and-peace-in-ukraine/>

Myth 16: The claim that the two warring sides are the same is a common ideological justification for not standing up for the massacred Ukrainian population.

This myth is obviously based on a misinterpretation of the statement that this is a war between imperial powers and it is a mistake to take sides with one of them. This is not to say that the two sides are the same in all respects. What is meant is that they are both bourgeois, and therefore it is contrary to the interests of the working class to oppose one bourgeois faction while at the same time defending the other bourgeois faction.

Both sides are the same in their bourgeois content. However, each applies different forms and means to enforce this content. The fact that some do it in more aggressive and brutal ways should not be an argument for joining with the lesser aggressors and bleeding for their interests.

“Who we do and do not act in solidarity with is rooted in the conditions of global class struggle, not morality, which we define here as an invention of liberal conscience, a universalizing system of values and principles of individual conduct that is compatible with capitalism and class society.”

*As a tool of state nationalism, war propaganda makes appeals to morality. We must be prepared to combat it. States present wars as moral issues, framing states at war in terms of “good” and “evil,” “innocent” and “guilty,” to rally public support for what is done in the interests of capital and the state, at the public’s expense. It’s no coincidence that anarchists who support Ukrainian nationalism frame it as the “lesser evil.” It’s telling that they cast deepening cooperation between the Ukrainian state and NATO, a tool of US imperialism, as part of a “defensive war,” while casting cooperation between Russian separatists in parts of Ukraine’s Donbass region (also known as the “People’s Republics”) and Russia as “imperialist aggression.” (...)*¹

“MTNW does not aim to take the side of any state involved in a war conflict, as we do not subscribe to the view that some of the states involved are aggressors and others merely innocent victims of aggression. Although in war some states show more aggressive tendencies than others, as a result they all act in an aggressive and oppressive manner towards the populations they govern. The MTNW campaign does not focus on supporting any one state, but rather on providing assistance to those who have been placed in an oppressive situation by state policy.

The ongoing war is a rivalry between different factions of the ruling class and pursues their interests primarily. As such, it is at odds with the interests of

¹ *No War But Class War: Against State Nationalism And Inter-Imperialist War In Ukraine*, text signed “Anarchists in Oakland, San Francisco, New York, and Pittsburgh”: <https://itsgoingdown.org/no-war-but-class-war-against-state-nationalism-and-inter-imperialist-war-in-ukraine/>

workers, the unemployed, students, pensioners and other non-privileged sections of the population.”²

“We need to be ready for the fact that the political situation in the country may be like in Afghanistan, Yemen or Somalia for a very long time, and nothing can guarantee the growth of the influence for anarchism, but the only chance for this is the refusal to flirt with some or another authorities/politicians as a “lesser evil”, and a resolute and unconditional opposition to them all. Otherwise, the masses will increasingly perceive anarchists as strange and incomprehensible clowns which don’t need to pay attention at all.”³

² Make Tattoo Not War [in Czech and English]: <https://maketattoonot-war.noblogs.org/o-nas-about/>

³ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

Myth 17: People who have not experienced occupation by the troops of an imperial power will find it difficult to understand why the people of Ukraine are defending themselves through war mobilization.

This myth is based on the stereotype that those who have not experienced something cannot understand it and certainly cannot be empathetic to those who have. It is in fact a kind of hierarchization, where the opinion of survivors has a high value, while the opinion of people without direct experience is considered worthless and fundamentally misguided. For example, the Czech *Anarchist Federation* states on its website:

*“The historical experience of occupation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is clearly not transferable and is difficult to understand in regions that have not been occupied or even have their own imperial past.”*¹

¹ Anarchistická federace, *O lidi musí jít především* [People must come first]: English translation: <https://www.afed.cz/text/7724/people-must-come-first/>

But we proclaim as loud as possible, and in spite of everything, that we are antimilitarists.

*We do not want a National Army. We do not want the Peoples’s Militias, which embody the will of the people, to disappear: they alone can defend freedom (...)*³

“Both sides of this war disgust us: instead of positioning ourselves on one side of this war, we oppose all state armies and their wars – we abhor not only their massacres, but also their blind obedience, nationalism, the stench of barracks, discipline and hierarchies. Opposing any form of militarism and state, however, does not mean that we oppose the taking up of arms. (...)

*We want to oppose the war between two states with our anti-militarism: an anti-war movement that does not refer to solidarity with a nation or a state, but to the rejection of any state war. No matter which state territory we live in, we can disrupt, desert and sabotage the propaganda, logistics and logic of war: by throwing a wrench into the machinery of national and continental mobilization, by scorning any cadre and recruiting mentality, by attacking internal rearmament and militarization, by sabotaging military supply lines and blockading the arms industry.”*⁴

³ A. and D. Prudhommeaux, *Catalogne Libertaire 1936–1937*, [in French]: <https://archivesautonomies.org/IMG/pdf/spartacus/spartacus-cahiersmensuels/cahiersmensuels-1946-prudhommeaux.pdf>

⁴ *Against war and military mobilization: preliminary notes on the invasion of Ukraine*, published in the pamphlet *War Against War – Anarchist and internationalist perspectives*: https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/war-against-war_a4.cleaned.pdf

lates, the more lives of ordinary Ukrainians are destroyed, the more the country becomes a ruin.”¹

“In recent years, some groups and individuals have drawn parallelisms between the social revolution in Spanish from 1936 to 1939 and the so-called “Rojava Revolution”. This is now also taking place with the participation of so-called anarchists in the war between the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian State. For our part, we have never used this parallelism, because it makes no sense historically and in relation to anarchism. This parallelism is drawn to justify the participation of anarchists, whether on an individual or collective level, in the wars of capitalism to defend a faction of capital. Even during the social revolution starting in 1936, there were many voices in the revolutionary camp that opposed the militarization of the revolution, as well as the formation of a people’s army. No matter how much history is falsified and twisted according to one’s own needs, it remains a falsification. The masses at that time in Spain did not fight for democracy, the republic, all instruments of capital’s domination, but for their abolition.”²

“For us, the military is an integral part of fascism. The army is the characteristic instrument of authoritarianism. To abolish the army is to abolish the possibility of oppression that this same army offers to the people. (...)

¹ Internationalist Perspective, *Don’t fight for “your” country!*: <https://internationalistperspective.org/dont-fight-for-your-country/>

² Excerpt from the introduction to the text published in German *Milizionäre, ja! Aber Soldaten, niemals! – Spanische anarchistische Milizen (1936)* [Militiamen, yes! But soldiers, never! – The Spanish Anarchist Militias (1936)]: <https://panopticon.blackblogs.org/2022/08/21/milizonaere-ja-aber-soldaten-niemals-spanische-anarchistische-milizen-1936/>

We disagree with statements along the lines of “you haven’t experienced it, so your positions will always be out of touch”. In fact, opinions on the issue vary considerably even among the survivors of the occupying forces’ aggression themselves. By the way, we live in a country that was occupied by Nazi troops and later by Warsaw Pact troops, yet we agree with the statement of the FAI (Anarchist Federation of Italy), which the Czech Anarchist Federation tries to counter by claiming that the position of the Italian section is based on misunderstanding due to not having lived through the occupation experience. People do not have to have been raped themselves to show an empathetic connection with those who experience rape. Likewise, people who have been raped can be callous and misguided. If the lived experience of occupation should automatically lead to greater empathy and appropriate analysis, then how do we explain the right-wing populism and nationalism that ran rampant during the Nazi and Stalinist occupation of Czechoslovakia?

“When people desert the state’s logic of war with or without weapons, when individuals resist any state occupation with or without weapons, when people help and support refugees and deserters, when they fraternize across borders and war lines, something can be done to counter the bloodbath of the state. If the state, its generals and politicians only know the language of oppression, the oppressed know the language of empathy and solidarity.”²

² *Against war and military mobilization: preliminary notes on the invasion of Ukraine*, published in the pamphlet *War Against War – Anarchist and internationalist perspectives*: https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/war-against-war_a4.cleaned.pdf

Myth 18: The resistance of the Ukrainian troops is based on the voluntary involvement of the Ukrainian population, which decided to join the fight.

Saying such a thing is as silly as saying that all Russian citizens support Putin's invasion of Ukraine. There are thousands of people who volunteer to join both the Ukrainian and Russian armies. Just as there are many who evade the draft, desert or emigrate to avoid having to serve in the army.

Not all Ukrainians are burning with the desire to fight for "their" bourgeois elites and the capitalist oligarchs who control them. The Ukrainian State is aware of this, which is why it tries to force participation in the army through involuntary recruitment.

According to the independent Kharkov website "Assembly", subpoenas are most often distributed in the same places in the city. Forced summonses are carried out by military police, armed soldiers, "territorial defense" fighters and police officers – in cars and in on foot patrols.

According to an eyewitness, those handing out summonses at the entrance to Klas in Odessa were very loudly indignant that they could not catch anyone. Judging by the feedback from

The anti-militarist position is not – with strictly pacifist exceptions – based on a refusal to resist war aggression. It merely prefers a different, non-militarized form of organizing this defense. Anarchists, for example, have a wealth of experience in waging armed struggle outside the structures of the State and armies. This struggle tends to be militant, but not militarized. Whenever some anarchists decided to subordinate their troops and militias to the logic of the army, they fell into a trap that later meant their defeat. A sad example can be seen in the militarization of some *CNT-FAI* militias during the revolution in Spain in 1936–1939. That time was contradictory, just like today. Therefore, even then, alongside the supporters of militarization, there were also consistent anti-militarists who had no problem taking up arms, but refused to ally themselves with one or another faction of the ruling class and did not submit to the military logic.

"Everybody hates war. Most of all the people who send other people to die on the battlefield. They claim that they abhor it, but alas, they're forced to it by the other side. The other side, which is encroaching on our traditional hunting grounds. The other side, which is invading a "sovereign" nation. We have no choice! We must defend ourselves... Which "we" are you a part of? Relentless propaganda on both sides pushes everyone to pick a side, to become an active participant or cheerleader in the war.

(...) The term ["war crime"] suggests that there are two ways of waging war: a civilized one and a criminal one. If ever there was a difference between the two, it was erased by advances in military technology. (...) The greater destructive force each side deploys, the greater the "collateral damage" to the civilian population. The more the war in Ukraine esca-

Myth 31: The anti-militarist initiative must be aimed at defeating the militarism of the Russian army.

This position is legitimate at its core, but the trouble is that it is only one part of a more complex truth. The other part is that the anti-militarist initiative should equally be aimed at defeating the militarism of the Ukrainian army and any other State army. Anti-militarism is a position based on opposition to all State armies and their wars. Such opposition implies that anti-militarists do not choose which one to side with in wars between States. In other words, they do not fight against the militarism of one State through supporting the militarism of another State. But that is exactly what is happening when some people want to fight against the militarism of the Russian army in terms of supporting the militarism of the Ukrainian army. They can wrap it in populist phrases about supporting “self-defense of the people”, but in reality they are supporting militarism, because the units that are fighting in Ukraine are part of the structures of the Ukrainian army and are under the command of the State authorities. There can be no question of their autonomy and certainly not of their subverting militarism. They are militaristic and this cannot be changed by the soldiers pinning black and red logos on their uniforms and issuing statements full of anti-State phrases.

users on the Telegram channel, these actions are causing growing public indignation.

The recruits hunting is taking place at gas stations, on streets and intersections, in stores, at places where humanitarian aid is distributed... Some people try not to accept the call, for example, by sitting in their cars and not opening their windows. Some try to resist. In response, the women of the men called up have had their arms broken and have been threatened.¹

The Russian anarchist portal *a2day.org* states:

“Although there are many people who want to fight against the aggressor, it is a common practice in Ukraine to catch draft-age men on the street and give them a draft order, then give them a medical examination in five minutes and send them to a military unit where such unprepared and often unfit recruits are not welcome. According to volunteer movement activist Valery Markus, such forcibly mobilized soldiers who do not want to fight are a potential bomb; they can desert and abandon their positions at any time; they are a waste of valuable resources and are useless anyway.”²

We have no doubt that many persons engage in war activities quite voluntarily. However, this is not a proof that there are not many who are forced to do so or who avoid it. While the case of the former continues to be brought to the forefront of the media by pro-Ukrainian war propaganda, the latter are mostly ignored. If they talk about them, then it’s done in the form of downplaying and belittling. There is a strong tendency to portray such people as a marginal phenomenon. A kind of

¹ Source in Russian: <https://assembly.org.ua/kak-vruchayut-povestki-na-uliczah-kharkova-i-chto-ob-etom-govoryat-yuristy/>

² Source in Russian: <https://a2day.org/armiya-sluzhba-i-otkaz/>

aberration or exception to the rule that the Ukrainian population voluntarily joins the army units and happily rushes to the front.

If the Russian State is rightly accused of war propaganda manipulation of facts, the same yardstick should be applied to pro-Ukrainian war propaganda, which uses identical manipulative mechanisms.

“Most of all, the working class is now worried about other things: the already mentioned street raids for the issuing of subpoenas (the most active in the eastern and western borderland regions) and the need to open departure from the country for those who are liable for military service.”³

“The media hide the fact that most of the male refugees fleeing to the West are deserters and shamelessly covers up the very existence of a mass of refugees who have fled to Russia and Belarus in the East of the country. (...)

Everything indicates that the Zelensky government is not only encouraging the hunt for “deserters”, but has embarked, using paramilitaries, on a veritable ethnic cleansing in several regions of the country. But this will not make the front pages. For the European media, everything depends on showing “the unity and courage of the Ukrainian people against Russia”⁴

³ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

⁴ *Communia, The false “internationalism” of the ruling classes and their media*: <https://en.communia.blog/the-false-internationalism-of-the-ruling-classes-and-their-media/>

“The point is that there is no capitalism without war, even more so in times of crisis, upon which this system once again unmask its violent and catastrophic nature. And, that in the context of the current capitalist crisis, a Third World War is possible. Which, by the way, would not be the classic type of war, but a new type of war: “hybrid”, fragmented, tiered, and worst of all, nuclear and devastating. Added to this is the ongoing global ecological crisis. Thus putting our species at serious risk of extinction.

For such compelling reasons, the slogans to transform imperialist war into class war and communism or extinction are no longer abstract, but concrete and urgent in order to defend and regenerate the life of the proletarianized humanity living on planet Earth.”¹

¹ *Proletarios Revolucionarios, On revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism in the current war between Russia and Ukraine/NATO*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarios-revolucionarios-on-revolutionary-defeatism-and-proletarian-internationalism-in-the-current-war-between-russia-and-ukraine-nato/>

Myth 30: *The statement “No war but class war” is an abstract and impractical slogan. It is useless to the bombed population.*

The people of Ukraine who are under attack must deal with the situation immediately. But they are being misled by those who claim that the solution is to fortify themselves in territorial defense, i.e. in the very places where the bombs are falling. Those who claim that it is necessary to ally with the Ukrainian army and put our lives in danger on the front are manipulators, and their solution appears to be very impractical. The same State that is driving men to war is preventing them from leaving the country and hiding from bombers outside Ukraine. The same Ukrainian State is pointing out the aggression of the Russian army, but its gestures show a willingness to escalate the conflict, even at the cost of countless more victims. Because when the State is concerned about its existence, it is willing to sacrifice the existence of those it governs. In such a situation, the effort to transform an inter-imperialist war into a class war is not an abstract ideology, but a matter of life and death. And this is not just a question of the survival of the Ukrainian population, but of the whole of humanity. The possibility of a third world war is not excluded, nor is the deployment of an extremely destructive nuclear arsenal.

“In response to the Russian attack, Ukraine announced that it would close its borders to all men “eligible for military service” between the ages of 18 and 60 and call them up for military service. We call for open borders and stand in solidarity with all deserters from the logic of war, whether from Russia, Ukraine or other countries.”⁵

⁵ *Solidarita sdezertérmi a emancipačnými protestnými hnutiami!* [Solidarity with deserters and protest movements for emancipation!] [in Slovak]: <https://zdola.org/solidarita-s-dezertermi-a-emancipacnymi-protestnymi-hnutiami/>

Myth 19: Refusing to support Ukrainian military forces means sacrificing the population to the bombing by Russian troops.

We do not want to elaborate further on why not supporting the war does not necessarily mean denying aid to people who are resisting aggressors – both Russian and Ukrainian. We will only add the information that it is the Ukrainian State that, under threat of punishment, forbids the male part of the Ukrainian population to leave the country and recruits thousands of men into the army to effectively stay in the places where the bombing is taking place. It is the Ukrainian State that is sacrificing these people against their will, possibly by mobilizing them under the pressure of patriotic and nationalist propaganda. We, on the other hand, say that no one should be denied the opportunity to move to a place of safety when they are in danger of being maimed or killed by the bombs of the attacking imperial army.

“We can only imagine how many Ukrainians would be happy if the state loosened its grip as the result of the international anarchist movement’s campaign. If this movement had taken its anti-war statements as more than just words, we would have seen its massive rallies for opening the borders near Ukrainian

(...) the left of Capital opposes fascism and not democracy because it defends the latter, it is democrat; or better said, because it is social-democratic or reformist, even if it calls itself “Marxist” (various Leninists) or “anarchist” (liberal anarchists).”³

“Other interpretations follow different approaches, assessing Russian imperialism as a danger for the whole of Europe and beyond. These interpretations are also endorsed by some components of libertarian orientation. Without questioning the threat posed by Russia’s authoritarianism and militarism, we believe that it will not be Russia’s military defeat in Ukraine that will prevent an authoritarian turn in Western Europe. The authoritarian social processes that are evidently dominant in Russia and in the OTSC countries are also being acted since years in the European Union, and the war is now giving them a further acceleration. Furthermore, “democracy” is based on the condition of someone’s privilege. The vision that presents the European Union as a beacon of democracy, identifying instead Russia, China and their satellites as the heirs of totalitarianism combined with wild capitalism is the quintessence of a Westernism that does not belong to us.”⁴

³ Proletarios Revolucionarios, *On revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism in the current war between Russia and Ukraine/NATO*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarios-revolucionarios-on-revolutionary-defeatism-and-proletarian-internationalism-in-the-current-war-between-russia-and-ukraine-nato/>

⁴ Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI-IAF), *For a new Anarchist Manifesto Against The War*, English translation: https://www.federazioneanarchica.org/archivio/archivio_2022/20220722manifestonowar_en.html

*future of Ukraine seems to be very sad in any case. Long before the war, Zelensky was often compared to young Putin not without reason, and as a result of victory, we can get a regime no less dictatorial than the Russian one. A very telling example came this month when he stated that the borders for men would not be open until the end of martial law (...)*²

“In short, both capitalist-imperialist blocs currently at war boast of being “the savior of democracy” and accuse their opponent of being “a fascist monster”. Thus justifying their warmongering and raving about repeating the “glorious” times of World War II. Enough to realize that “democracy vs. fascism” is a false antagonism or better said an inter-bourgeois and inter-imperialist war where proletarians are nothing but cannon fodder. (...)

Historically, when the bourgeoisie stopped using democracy to combat the advance of the struggle of the proletariat, then it resorted to fascism... and vice versa. Logically, although they are not the same in the form nor in the intensity of the violence exercised by the State of the rich and powerful over the exploited and oppressed, in essence they are the same or, to use a vivid phrase, democracy and fascism are two tentacles of the same octopus: the social dictatorship of Capital over proletarianized humanity all over the world. Therefore, like the left and the right, democracy and fascism are not opposites, they are complementary.

² *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

embassies many months ago. What to talk about, if even on the May Day you found more important affairs? It seems that there is nowhere to wait for help, and one can only guess how many more Ukrainian families will die, because they don’t want to part with each other. How do you differ from politicians if you declare things that you are not going to fulfill?”¹

“It’s simple, one question: what are we fighting for? An example, very quickly: a colleague woke up on February 24 and found out that the occupation was underway. He stayed at home in the cellar for fifteen days, it was impossible to go to Kharkov. He fled across Russia, without anything, only his identity documents [Diya]. In Russia, at the border with the Baltic States, they did not let him enter at first, but then they did. From there he went to Poland, closer to his native Ukraine. He bought a laptop, found a remote job, rented an apartment and worked! And then the call came: all men abroad – return to Ukraine or you will be fired! He thought about it and decided to emigrate to Canada!”²

[...]

¹ *Guerra in Ucraina e diserzione: intervista con il gruppo anarchico “Assembly” di Kharkiv* [War in Ukraine and defection: interview with anarchist group “Assembly” in Kharkiv] [in Italian and English]: <https://umanitanova.org/guerra-in-ucraina-e-diserzione-intervista-con-il-gruppo-anarchico-assembly-di-kharkiv-iten/>

² Source in Russian: <https://assembly.org.ua/voennoobyazannye-ishchut-novye-sposoby-vyezda-iz-ukrainy-vo-vremya-voiny/>

Myth 20: People who refuse to support the resistance of the Ukrainian army cling to abstract ideological dogmas that cannot practically help those affected.

Those who reject war are often the same people who help those affected by war. At the same time, some are actively sabotaging the continuation of the war, hampering the war industry, and disrupting war mobilization through practical actions. For example, *the Italian anarchist federation FAI*, promoting non-participation in the war, declares:

*“The first commitment of those who oppose the war is the construction and dissemination of mutual aid practices such as networks of solidarity from below to fulfill the immediate needs of the people who suffer most from the consequences of the conflict, being these food or medical support. There is also the need of support networks for those who practice strikes, sabotage, desertion, such as transnational networks for those who hide or flee from or over both sides of the front.”*¹

¹ Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI-IAF), *For a new Anarchist Manifesto Against The War*, English translation: <https://>

into the structures of the State, which at the same time do not hesitate to stifle any radical tendency. It is doubtful that the democratic form of the State that has been achieved means the disappearance of authoritarian tendencies from the State apparatus. They will remain and manifest themselves whenever the working class raises its head and begins to act combatively as an organized autonomous force. In other words, liberal democracy will never be the antithesis or negation of dictatorship; it will always be one of the ways in which the totalizing capitalist order is organized. In fact, dictatorial and democratic forces are present in every State simultaneously and are not mutually exclusive. Their mutual relation depends on the (non)combativity of the working class and the (in)ability of the bourgeoisie to secure the rule of its class over society.

The State will only fall if we subvert both its dictatorial and democratic tendencies simultaneously. If we focus exclusively on suppressing one part, it will sooner or later be restored with the help of the other. Let us not forget that the democratic State retains the ability to introduce authoritarian measures, just as the fascist State sometimes pacifies the proletariat by democratic co-optation. The dilemma of fascism or democracy is false. In fact, internationalist revolutionaries know that there are only two options before us: capitalism or its revolutionary overcoming.

*“The fascination of “armed struggle” quickly backfires on the proletarians as soon as they direct their blows exclusively against a particular form of the state rather than the State itself.”*¹

“If for Russia defeat in the war means some political changes (at least a palace coup, and possible disintegration into parts or partial loss of sovereignty), the

¹ Gilles Dauvé, *Fascism/Antifascism*: <https://libcom.org/article/fascismantifascism-gilles-dauve/>

Myth 29: In this war, democracy must win to prevent fascism/dictatorship from winning.

There is no question that fascism/dictatorship is a problem. It's just that the worst product of fascism is anti-fascism. Whenever the specter of fascism is raised as if it were the worst of all evils, the way is paved to support other forms of State – like democratic ones – with the consequence of supporting their crimes. Anti-fascist unity is nothing else but inter-class collaboration, where the proletarians collude with the bourgeoisie, which, despite the “temporary alliance”, never hesitate to crack down hard on all anti-capitalist and anti-State manifestations. Anti-fascist mobilizations tend to be justified by the need to confront totalitarianism, but they do so in a way that reinforces the authoritarian features of parliamentary democracy. As Gilles Dauvé has noted, “*Antifascism will always end in increasing totalitarianism. Its fight for a “democratic” State will end in strengthening the State.*”

Parliamentary democracy may represent a lesser intensity of State violence than a fascist regime, but it is no reason to fight and die for democracy. Those who claim that the working class is more and better organized in a liberal democracy are so caught up in their fantasies that they are out of touch with reality. Indeed, the militant working-class movement in democracy often tends to wither away; it is gradually absorbed

This is not an ideology detached from life. These are concrete practical steps that save lives and help to organize them in a more just way than is conceivable in the case of any war mobilization by conflicting powers.

“As revolutionaries of other countries, we must be vigilant and be in solidarity with such actions when they take place, not only by translating them, spreading them and making them visible, but also by fighting against the bourgeoisie of “our own” countries; meaning internationalizing the proletarian struggle against imperialist war, because the isolation of such actions will inevitably lead them to defeat (...)”²

“And to all the warmongers of the left and far left of Capital who will once again accuse revolutionaries of being “neutral” and not “taking a stand”, we answer them that it's quite the contrary that we propose in this manifesto and in our militant activity in general: we take an unwavering stand for the party of the proletariat and the defense of its historical and immediate interests, we stand up for its action of subversion of this world of war and misery, we stand up for the development, the generalization, the coordination and the centralization of the already existing acts of fraternization, desertion, mutiny on both sides of the front, against both belligerents, against both States, against both

www.federazioneanarchica.org/archivio/archivio_2022/20220722manifestonowar_en.html

² Proletarios Revolucionarios, *On revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism in the current war between Russia and Ukraine/NATO*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarios-revolucionarios-on-revolutionary-defeatism-and-proletarian-internationalism-in-the-current-war-between-russia-and-ukraine-nato/>

nations, against both local fractions of the world bourgeoisie... We stand up for the extension of these struggles and their organic connection as moments of a totality with all the struggles that have been happening since several months, everywhere under the black sun of the social dictatorship of Capital, whether in Sri Lanka, Peru, Iran, Ecuador or Libya...”³

³ Class War, *Internationalist Manifesto against capitalist war and peace in Ukraine...*: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/internationalist-manifesto-against-capitalist-war-and-peace-in-ukraine/>

“In fact, when we prepare to fight an enemy that is threatening us, we must ask ourselves what that enemy intends to do so that a maximum amount of information allows us to retaliate, defend ourselves and go to the counter-attack. So, it seems to me, we have not asked ourselves the fundamental question: what is war? We have not done so because we all believe, one way or another, that we know perfectly well what war is, so we are quite capable of doing whatever is necessary to fight those intending to bring it about.

In actual fact our ideas are not all that clear. That even the bourgeois press does not have clear ideas on the subject matters little because it is certainly not from there that we will find what we need to produce the minimum analysis required to make our actions coherent and meaningful.”¹

“In the many interviews with Ukrainians on Western media, you never hear someone express opposition or even doubts about the war, although we know, from social media and our own sources, that they do exist. But according to the media, everyone there is willing to die for the nation. Yet Zelensky found it necessary to issue a ban on all men from 18 to 60 years of age from leaving the country. Everyone must remain available as cannon fodder for the homeland.”²

¹ Alfredo Maria Bonanno, *Towards Anarchist Antimilitarism*: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-towards-anarchist-antimilitarism/>

² Internationalist Perspective, *Don't fight for "your" country!*: <https://internationalistperspective.org/dont-fight-for-your-country/>

Myth 28: Opponents of supporting Ukrainian military forces are in fact propagandists for the Putin's regime.

If we look at things with a sober eye, not with the eye burdened with war propaganda, we can see one important fact: war and pro-regime propaganda is present on both the Russian and Ukrainian sides. But we do not choose one war propaganda in opposition to the other. We refuse to listen to it and spread it, whichever side it comes from.

The mechanism of war propaganda is the selectivity of information. Certain parts of the colorful whole are taken out and blown up to incredibly large proportions. Other parts, in turn, are glossed over, made invisible, silenced, ridiculed and belittled. Those who want an example of such propaganda need only look at the reports circulating over and over in some anarchist media about the pride of the Ukrainian military units, but there is no mention of the numerous deserters and opponents to the war in the Ukrainian region, nor of the needless atrocities committed by the Ukrainian army. We reject this kind of war propaganda, just as we reject that of the supporters of the Putin's regime. Anti-war agitation is not pro-regime propaganda.

Myth 21: People rejecting the military resistance of the Ukrainians are only interested in ideological purity and do not care about real people.

The accusation of disregard for the victims of war aggression is at this point more emotionally tinged than based on truth. For the refusal to engage in war in our conception is not motivated by concern for abstract ideas and disinterest in the concrete people of the bombed-out cities. On the contrary, these people are of primary concern in our analysis.

The black and white vision that divides people into considerate supporters of the Ukrainian army and reckless opponents of support is very misleading. In reality, both camps are often driven by an equally sincere desire to be as helpful as possible to a maimed and murdered population. What differs is their position on the question of what is an appropriate and effective method of aid. Some see it in supporting the war effort on the Ukrainian side, others in subverting the war effort on all sides of the war line.

We will not accuse our opponents of not caring about the people sacrificed in the war. We don't think they are unscrupulous, only that they are mistaken in their estimates. They are

wrong when they say that the lives of the bombed population are best protected by joining the war effort.

As the popular saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”. And therefore, we cannot avoid to criticize the war propagandists within anarchist circles on the grounds that “they mean well”. Our analysis goes deeper than the intentions themselves and relates to who is making the claims. We are primarily interested in what is actually happening. Thus, when people sacrifice lives for bourgeois interests on the battlefield, and others interpret this as defending civilian lives from a deadly war, then we are saying: war leads to escalating brutalization and mass murder, not to the protection of lives.

“Fighting for the homeland is not in the interest of the vast majority of the population of Ukraine. Whatever the advantages of living in a country integrated into NATO and the EU, they do not outweigh the disadvantages of war. When, in a few weeks, months or years, the guns fall silent and the smoke above the bombed cities dissipates, the Ukrainians will have a poisoned country full of ruins and mass graves. And Western countries will likely be less generous with money for reconstruction than they are now with weapons.”¹

“Public discourse seems to force us to take sides: either with Russian imperialism or with NATO expansionism and the prominent role of the US. We are supposed to take a side with one nationalism or with the other. But both systems organise exploitation with different means and turn borders into deadly tools. It is not by chance that the remilitarisation of borders has happened first against migrants seeking a

¹ Internationalist Perspective, *Don't fight for "your" country!:* <https://internationalistperspective.org/dont-fight-for-your-country/>

those same proletarians, without intermediaries or representatives of any kind.”²

² Proletarios Revolucionarios, *On revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism in the current war between Russia and Ukraine/NATO*, English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarios-revolucionarios-on-revolutionary-defeatism-and-proletarian-internationalism-in-the-current-war-between-russia-and-ukraine-nato/>

humanity, because we do not see this as a way to advance towards our emancipation.

“The armed forces are vulnerable to social forces at work in the larger society that spawns them. Revolt in civilian society bleeds through the fabric of the military into the ranks of enlisted people. The relationship between officers and enlisted people mirrors the relationship between bosses and employees, and similar dynamics of class conflict emerge in the military and civilian versions of the workplace. The military is never a hermetically sealed organisation. Our rulers know all this. Our rulers know that they are vulnerable to mass resistance, and they know that their wealth and power can be collapsed from within by the working-class women and men whom they depend on. We need to know it, too.”¹

“Let’s say also and above all that, due to the unfavorable balance of forces for our class at this moment or due to its defeat after the world revolt of 2019 up to the present, the positions of proletarian internationalism and revolutionary defeatism cannot currently be offensive, that is, capable of being presented as a real alternative and carrying out the world proletarian revolution, but they can be defensive. Defensive of what? Not of abstract principles, but of the flesh and blood lives of hundreds of thousands of proletarians of those regions at war. Lives to be defended by

¹ *Harass the Brass; Some notes toward the subversion of the US armed forces*, text published in the pamphlet *Olive-Drab Rebels – Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War*, by Antagonism: <https://www.geocities.ws/antagonism1/olivedrab/harass2.html>

better life. It is not by chance that no declarations from all sides are currently concerned with people’s actual lives.”²

² *No to War. For a Transnational Politics of Peace*: <https://www.transnational-strike.info/2022/02/24/no-to-war-for-a-transnational-politics-of-peace/>

Myth 22: Criticism of involvement in war is often based on outdated quotes from anarchist classics that cannot be applied to the contemporary context.

It is true that sometimes figures like Malatesta, Bakunin, Goldman and others are quoted as having spoken out against the bourgeois conception of war. But it is also true that the current supporters of the war on the side of the Ukrainian army have the same tendency to use quotations to give weight to their own positions.

It's easy to pick out just one part of one person's entire work and ignore others, to interpret his words in one's own way, because there is no way to verify how he really intended that part. The dead can no longer debate or redefine their positions in light of the current times and situation. That is why we see their quotations as an addition to the argument, not as its core. We find it more important to listen to the voices of our contemporaries and share our views with them than to debate in which way Malatesta saw (or didn't see) something a hundred years ago. This is exactly what happens when we try to look for the anti-militarist and revolutionary defeatist manifestations of the proletarians in Ukraine, Russia and elsewhere in the world, under the layer of war propaganda.

that part of the Ukrainian population that has decided to fight and die for bourgeois democracy. They have chosen this, they say, and we must support them in this so that we are not disrespectful, paternalistic and unscrupulous. In short, this section of the liberal democrats, who for some reason call themselves anarchists, are willing to support even the tendencies most hostile to anarchism on the grounds that we must respect the self-determination and opinions of the people who express these tendencies. If we wanted to transfer this perspective to the Czech Republic, for example, it would mean that we should support the very large part of the local population that sees parliamentary democracy as a way of defending its interests. Before every election we would call for their support and send resources to politicians' election campaigns, because that is what these people want and we do not want to be disrespectful of their self-determination. And if someone from another country dared to criticize the participation of Czech workers in the elections, we should condemn them as a supercilious person who does not listen to Czech workers and wants to lecture them on how to choose their future based on a sense of cultural superiority. That would be absurd and we do not share that perspective. That is why, just as we criticize the participation of Czech workers in the elections, we will criticize the participation of Ukrainian workers in the war. If someone calls it condescending, let it be so. We are not organizing to make the whole world think we are wonderful, but to make the world a better place to live. To do that, we certainly need links with other people, but not necessarily with everyone and at all costs. We don't succumb to the mania for quantity that says the more people you bring together the more success you achieve. Rather, we look at the content and for what purpose people are associating. Reactionary and counter-revolutionary positions will not have our support even if they are chosen by the vast majority of

Myth 27: To criticize the resistance of the Ukrainian army from outside Ukraine is to deny the Ukrainian population self-determination and the ability to be a self-determining agent of change.

We do not think that we have any prerogative to decide the future of the Ukrainian population. But neither do we think that they are denied that right when someone criticizes certain actions that they choose to take as part of their self-determination. Talk about the right to self-determination very often becomes an argument for overlooking the horrors that someone has chosen. It is also taken by some as a justification for supporting reactionary tendencies that hinder emancipatory movements. This is why we then see some anarchists taking offense at the fact that a State does not respect the sovereignty of another, as if perhaps the job of anarchists should be to fight for the State and its sovereignty. We can also see the same anarchists calling for support for

Our attitude to war is not predefined by what some classic anarchist ever said. Rather, the theoretical rejection of war and its practical sabotage are based on the tendencies of those who today find themselves in the maelstrom of war or are threatened to be drawn into it soon. In the same way that Malatesta is quoted, we could quote the thousands of deserters from the Ukrainian army, the women who prevent the Ukrainian State from forcibly recruiting their partners, the saboteurs who have withdrawn from bombed-out cities to subvert the war infrastructure outside Ukraine with guerrilla tactics.

But this is not primarily about quotations, it is about finding a strategy to minimize the impact of the war and how best to use the situation to organize the needs of the working class. We define war as the negation of these needs for the sake of the needs of the bourgeoisie. Not because some anarchist said it a hundred years ago, but because we ourselves are part of the working class that is drawn into the war and forced to make the greatest sacrifices for interests that are alien to us.

Myth 23: Antimilitarism is important, but it is a problem when it becomes dogma.

This argument we often hear from people who are the first to issue countless proclamations and publications with anti-militarist themes at a time when the war is on the other side of the world, but when it comes to their doorstep, they start reproducing war propaganda. The reason for this tilt of opinion is supposedly due to the different context, pragmatism and non-dogmatism. The history of class struggles is replete with examples where some anarchists have tried to redefine their practice using the same justifications. Anarchists joining the republican government in Spain or the Czech ones taking their seats in the first republican government and joining the Communist Party. We can also remember the anarchists who, after 1917, preferred to join the Bolsheviks or those who took sides in the First World War. All these examples showed that although their actors talked about pragmatism, practice disproved their claims. Rather, their actions were ultimately pragmatic for the ruling class, who used these anarchists as useful idiots, as is now happening to some in the case of the war in Ukraine.

There is no doubt that there are different contexts for wars. But the core is unchanged, regardless of whether we are talking about two world wars, various “national liberation” wars or the current war in Ukraine. Different factors may vary. For example, the balance of power between the warring blocs, who acts more invasive and aggressive, or what ideology they wrap

dency from the multidimensional whole and ignore or downplay the others. We try to listen to as many voices as possible, but we only support those that we find constructive. Others we criticize and refuse to support. In short, we perceive different tendencies and do not try to support war propaganda that portrays the Ukrainian population as a united community calling unanimously for involvement in the war.

Some of our critics accuse us of not listening, but they ignore the voices of the part of the population that refuses to support the Ukrainian army and opposes the forced conscription of men who do not want to fight. The voice of the Ukrainian deserters is ignored, while the voice of the Ukrainian soldiers is reproduced as if it were the only one being heard. This is called war propaganda, not listening and empathy. Here some residents of Kharkov are witnessing:

“People choose the best solution to their situation. Why would they want to protect something that does not belong to them? For 30 years, the authorities have been picking their pockets, offering themselves palaces and yachts abroad. Now, let’s the elite protect their hard-earned property, while the working people will look at it from safe abroad. If the ruling class doesn’t want to defend itself, won’t even send its children to the front, then why should the exploited class fight? Show me some oligarch (I don’t care if he’s Russian or Ukrainian) who sold his property, armed himself and his guard battalion, and now personally burns tanks in the front line.”¹

¹ Source in Russian: <https://assembly.org.ua/voennoobyazannye-harkov-ishchut-novye-sposoby-vyezda-iz-ukrainy-vo-vremya-voiny/>

Myth 26: People who criticize participation in war from a safe distance are unemphatic and condescending because they do not listen to the people on the ground.

Although we perceive the condescending tendencies of some people, we think that the label of condescending is often mechanically applied to anyone who speaks critically about the Ukrainian army's support for the war. The idea is to belittle, stigmatize and exclude the voice of critics from the debate. The strongest impact is then on people from Western Europe or the USA, whose opinion is often not taken into account for the mere fact that they do not come from Central or Eastern Europe. At its core, such a mechanism is actually discriminatory, stereotyping and prejudiced, despite the fact that its proponents accuse others of doing just that.

Saying that we are against the war and refuse to take sides in the conflict does not automatically mean that we do not care about the opinion of the people in Ukraine and that we are indifferent when they are under fire from Russian troops. In fact, we are listening to these people and we see that there is not just one unified voice, but a huge patchwork of many opinions, which often diverge at their very base. In fact, the same people who accuse us of not listening often extract only one ten-

their actions in. What does not change, however, is the basic nature of wars. They are always bloody conflicts fought by different factions of the ruling class for their interests, and the working class is forced to make the greatest sacrifice in this process. The only war we can support is class war.

Anti-militarism is not an abstract ideological construction detached from reality. On the contrary, it is a living process that emerges from the life and struggles of the working class. From the experiences of real flesh and blood people. When we talk about anti-militarism, we are talking about principles tested by practice, not theoretical treatises falling from the desks of academics. We do not adhere to dogma. On the contrary, we are constantly confronting our positions with reality, which proves to us many times that being an anti-militarist made sense during WW1, just as it does in the case of the current war in Ukraine.

“Ukrainians, Russians and people from any other part of the world are our brothers and sisters; class brothers and sisters and we are committed to them, we raise our voice for them to continue shouting: NO TO WAR! NO TO MILITARISM! whoever rules.

Enough with killing each other for your dirty business. Enough with your business.

STOP THE WAR! STOP IT, NOW!

NEITHER PUTIN NOR BIDEN!

NO TO NATO!

SOLDIERS OF ALL ARMIES: DESERT!”¹

¹ Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT-IWA), *No a la guerra, no al militarismo. Contra todo imperialismo. Ni Putin, ni Biden* [No to War, No to Militarism. Against all Imperialisms. Neither Putin nor Biden], [in Spanish]: <https://bajocincaibertario.blogspot.com/2022/02/no-la-guerra-no-al-militarismo-contra.html>

“Greetings therefore to the proletarian women in Ukraine, both in the western region of Transcarpathia (thus under Ukrainian military administration) and in Donbass, in the “eastern provinces” (thus under Russian military administration), who took to the streets to express their contempt for the “defense of the homeland” and to demand the return of their sons, their brothers, their relatives sent to any of the fronts to defend interests that are not their own.

Greetings to the proletarians in Ukraine who are secretly sheltering Russian soldiers who deserted, at their own risk because when they are arrested, either by the Russian military authorities, or by the Ukrainian ones, they are made to understand where the legal force is in this filthy world, which side and which homeland they have to defend and that no fraternization will be tolerated

Greetings to the proletarians in Ukraine, who in spite of the compulsory conscription, flee their incorporation in military units by all means at their disposal, legal or not, and thus refuse to sacrifice themselves and to serve under the folds of the Ukrainian national rag.

Greetings to the Russian soldiers who, since the beginning of the “special operations” in Ukraine, have been fleeing the war and its massacres, abandoning tanks and armored vehicles in working order, and seeking their salvation in flight, via networks of solidarity with deserters from both armies.”²

² Class War, *Internationalist Manifesto against capitalist war and peace in Ukraine...*: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/internationalist-manifesto-against-capitalist-war-and-peace-in-ukraine/>

“In the name of “national liberation”, “nationalism of the oppressed” or “anti-imperialism”, the Left ends-up supporting imperialist war, it supports the organised and reciprocal slaughter of different nationalities of the working-class under “their” flags. The chimerical ideal of “national liberation” has historically resulted in little more than the emergence of corrupt, bureaucratic regimes, which eventually suppress labour once they are in control of the machinery of the capitalist state.”¹

¹ Craftwork, *Anarchism, nationalism, war, and peace*: <https://libcom.org/article/anarchism-nationalism-war-and-peace/>

Myth 25: It is easy to refuse participation in war from people who express their views in a safe place far from the war and do not have to respond to the bombing of their cities.

Yes, indeed it's easier to organize your own view of the war from a safe distance than when you have bombers flying overhead. But is such a view inferior and should not be taken into account? Is the view of people in bombed-out places superior to other views on the basis that people in a war zone experience greater horror and suffering?

We might as well say that it is easy to call for more weapons to be supplied to the Ukrainian army and for support for the territorial defense fighters from people who are doing this from the safety of their homes, who have never held firearms in their lives and would not be able to use them if the war came here. We see and respect their opinion, even if we do not express support for it, because we have a different opinion. Why should a different standard be applied to people who refuse to choose sides in a war and do not call for support for the troops?

Myth 24: Refusing to take part in the fight on the side of the Ukrainian war resistance is a manifestation of the Western Left's cultural arrogance.

This myth is strange only because the people behind this text come from Central Europe, so they can hardly be accused of Western condescension. In fact, the contradiction between Western and Central-Eastern European mentality is a false contradiction. Not that there aren't factors that influence people's opinions based on where they live. They exist, they just shouldn't be stereotyped as universally valid templates.

This is not about any contrast between the unemphatic West and the empathetic center or east. It is a contrast between two different perspectives through which the problem of war is viewed. One is liberal reformist and therefore counter-revolutionary, the other is revolutionary. Both perspectives are held by people who subscribe to anarchism, which shows that this label alone does not imply agreement on fundamental issues. Importantly, both poles of these conceptual frameworks span the globe. Reproducing stereotypes along the lines of West versus East certainly does not help us to undermine the imperialist mindset that is characterized by the creation of such territorially defined opposites.

The fact is that the revolutionary defeatist position, namely the refusal to take sides with one of the warring parties, is not only present among Western anarchists, although it is more strongly articulated here. Its traces can also be found in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine itself and other places in Central and Eastern Europe.

We see the search for non-existent contradictions more as an effort to insidiously remove some people from the arena of international debate and practical coordination of anarchist activities. It is enough to label someone as condescending or unscrupulous to lead many to the conclusion that it is not legitimate to debate with such people, let alone cooperate with them. We see there a certain tendency to manipulation.

“Let us not forget that the best way to push the masses towards acceptance of war is through spreading the fear of war. Tomorrow, with a few adjustments in the regime's propaganda, this fear of war will easily transform itself into the will and desire to accept a circumscribed war in order to prevent total war, and who knows whether a new Kropotkin will appear (from among the many neo-Kropotkinians who infest our pages) and support the need for the small war in the face of the total one. (After all “small is beautiful”).”¹

¹ Alfredo Maria Bonanno, *Towards Anarchist Antimilitarism*: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-towards-anarchist-antimilitarism/>