

The End of Antifa?

Antti Rautiainen

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Despite the bleakness of the situation in Ukraine, at least I was amused by the fact that Nazis were fighting on both sides of the front, killing each other.

But then I found out that some “anti-fascists” have been doing the same¹²³.

I am sure that in terms of the entire former Soviet Union only a minority of the Antifas is willing to die for Poroshenko or Putin. However, the scale of this problem is significant, and any attempts to react to it⁴ also have their shortcomings⁵.

Imagine, for example that BORN⁶ or NSO-North⁷ were to capture St. Petersburg and declare it a “National republic.” Or some Caucasus Emirate⁸ were to grab Stavropol and established a government there. In this case, would we demand that Putin “immediately stop military actions and resolve the conflict in a peaceful way, in an open and equal negotiation, without the threat of violence,” as was formulated in the statement made by “representatives of music bands, antifascist groups and DIY initiatives?” I doubt it.

¹ Interview with anti-fascists, including “Timur” who volunteered in the Azov battalion of the Ukrainian government theins.ru

² Interview with Anton Fatullayev, former Russian anti-fascist prisoner who went to fight on the pro-Russian rebel side and died soon after the interview www.anarcho-news.com

³ Interview from a Russian TV-channel with Spanish “anti-fascists” who went to fight for the pro-Russian rebels www.youtube.com

⁴ Letter from “representatives of bands, antifascist groups and DIY-initiatives from around the world” against the war. www.facebook.com...

Full list of signatures is available here: vk.com

⁵ These shortcomings, related to a vague pacifism, are explained in detail in this (comradely) commentary of comrade Mrachnik on Nihilist.li website, which is not available in English. The following paragraphs of this column follow a line of argumentation similar to that of comrade Mrachnik. nihilist.li...

⁶ Fighting Organisation of Russian Nationalists, Nazi terror group. Members of this organization were sentenced for the murder of anti-fascists Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova, and some are currently in court facing charges for having participated in the murders of anti-fascists Ivan Khutorskoy, Fyodor Filatov, and Ilya Dzhaparidzhe among others.

⁷ National Socialist Organisation – North, Nazi terror group, members of which were sentenced for the murder of anti-fascist Alexey Krylov and 26 other killings.

⁸ Clandestine Islamist government operating in the southern most part of Russia, the northern slope of Caucasus mountains. Declared established by former clandestine president of separatist Chechnya, Dokku Umarov in October 2007.

Of course, fighting on Putin's side against either of the above wouldn't be an option either, as anarchists should not engage in any war except class war.

These shortcomings in the position adopted by the subcultural milieu are a minor issue. The bigger issue is that of people from the anti-fascist movement supporting either the position of the government in Kiev, or the pro-Russian "Crimea is ours" one.

Antifa in the ex-USSR has always formed a common front for the different movements, from the anarchists, social democrats and Stalinists to liberals and even national-patriots, and it was deliberately created to be so. Under the circumstances in the '00s this approach was a necessary one, with many benefits for anarchists. Since anarchist tactics and positions have always been more clearly defined than those of the rest, anarchists managed to involve many patriots and other undecided, in actions such as: May Day, January 19⁹, anarchist blocs during the protest wave against election fraud 2011–2012, etc. Antifa was one of the very few successful projects of anarchists in the ex-USSR in the past 15 years, but this success was accompanied by big losses, murdered comrades.

Many of the "undecided" drifted towards the anarchist movement, but not all of them. There was always a considerable segment that only wanted to have fun at gigs without the threat of Nazis, or stood in support of "veterans," simply being antifascist, without seeing any other alternative to power. And not all of them have been "undecided," as a neutral attitude towards power and capital can also be a well argued and thought out choice. I do not believe in some universal individual progress in search for truth, I believe that the formation of the individual opinion is largely the result of random processes and depends little on one's intelligence. And currently, with the growing wave of patriotism, in Russia as well as in the Ukraine, of course, most of the "undecided" are drifting towards supporting their respective governments.

The fact that the most patriotic elements of Antifa have ended up on opposite sides of the front in Ukraine shows that the Antifa era is over. As a matter of fact, in Russia this era had already ended by 2011–2012 with Nazis, perhaps only temporarily, reducing the degree of violence and, for the first time since the period of the RNE¹⁰, focusing on building a mass protest movement. The shaky unity among Antifa was only possible when fighting off a common threat, but with the defeat of BORN and NSO-North, and the tactical reorientation of Russian fascists towards mass movement politics, this unity quickly dissolved and with it, many aspects of Antifa as well.

The "left unity," built up during the protests of 2011–2012, is now buried together with the anti-fascism of the previous era. With the general rise of patriotism, Sergei Udaltsov¹¹ and other "leftists" took a pro-Kremlin stance in regards to the Ukraine. These people are the core of the Russian "left," and the majority of "leftists" everywhere are Imperialists, who in difficult times always take the side of the authorities. The National-Bolshevik Party has, after almost a decade of liberal politics, also returned to its 1993 position, which can be briefly summarized using their old slogan "Stalin, Beriya, Gulag!"

⁹ Annually, a demonstration takes place on the 19th of January in remembrance of the murders of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova on that date in 2009. This is the biggest annual anti-fascist demonstration in Moscow.

¹⁰ Russian National Unity, nationalist organisation which for a brief period in the '90s managed to rally most of the far-right under its flag. Subsequently they fell into oblivion as authorities excluded it from parliamentary politics and its leader Aleksandr Barkashov became more and more erratic.

¹¹ Leader of the Left Front uniting a wide spectrum of Russian leftists, those left of the parliamentary Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Imprisoned on the bogus charges of having organised the Bolotnaya square riot on the 6th of May 2012. Unlike the Left Front, has adopted pro-government position on the Ukrainian war.

Now we are in the awkward situation where our comrades are imprisoned together with these “leftists” for the “Bolotnaya square case.” There is nothing we can do about this — political prisoners are always a legacy from the past. The struggles for which they are serving time are always struggles of the past. This is not to imply that past struggles were mistakes or absurd. In 2002, 2005, and even 2009 the anti-fascist struggle was a central issue. It was an important struggle, no one should regret having participated in it, even if some of our allies from that period are now allies of the state, and thus our enemies. It was as important as going to the “Bolotnaya square” in 2012, no matter the consequences.

The new political situation is in many aspects similar to that of 1999–2002, the time of the second Chechenyan conflict. On the one hand it was difficult to take action back then because it was impossible to find allies — there were just a small handful of anti-war “leftists,” and the liberals were busy with pointless projects such as the electoral campaign for Khakamada¹². On the other hand, at that time it was simpler knowing that we could only count on ourselves, as only anarchists held positions which made sense.

I got used to these conditions, and adopted the classifications from those times for life. Thus, the current situation is clear to me. But I do understand why people who were used to such categories as “Antifa” or “left” are confused. In the best case they write naive statements, in the worst case they support the DNR¹³ or even join the war against it. But times changes, and it is necessary to see these changes and reach the appropriate conclusions.

¹² Irina Khakamada, independent (neo)liberal, anti-war candidate in the 2004 presidential elections. Gained 3.9% of the vote.

¹³ Donetsk People’s Republic of pro-Russian separatists.

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