

Why is it necessary to support Ukraine?

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The results of the first 30 years of “democracy” in Ukraine are, to put it mildly, unconvincing. The economy and the media are in the hands of rival oligarchs, the level of corruption is off scale, economic development is below many countries in Africa, and in addition the country has become the center of the neo-Nazi movement around the world. And these problems are basically home-grown, and not the result of the Kremlin’s intrigues.

But the alternative to the “Russian world” is even worse. Putin is not the gendarme of Europe, but the gendarme of the whole world — as soon as another dictator appears somewhere who tortures and kills his own people by the thousands, in Syria, Myanmar or somewhere else, Putin resorts to support him. There are virtually no elections in Russia anymore. The consequence of any, even the most moderate attempts to change something in the country will be criminal cases and persecution.

I do not believe that the next round of loud statements and escalation of the situation will result in a full-scale war. But since the confrontation does not disappear, it can begin in 5–10 years, including as a result of an escalation cycle, even if no one wants it. And in the event of a full-scale war, you need to be on the side of Ukraine. As Malatesta said, “For me there is no doubt that even the worst form of democracy is always preferable to the best of dictatorships.” Neutrality in the war between Ukraine and Russia would mean neutrality in the war between democracy and dictatorship.

It is impossible to take seriously the leftists who now say that they are “against all forms of imperialism, both American and Russian.” American imperialism exists in many places, for example in Iraq and Central America, but it does not exist in Ukraine. On the contrary, NATO and the US have already effectively transferred Ukraine to the Russian sphere of influence. Ukraine’s financial support is insufficient to stop a theoretical attack. No one sends military units to Ukraine.

When Jews started a hopeless uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, most of its initiators were Zionists. But anarchists and other left-wing internationalists did not shout that “we are against both German and Jewish nationalism and imperialism at the same time.” When the French military killed tens of thousands of mostly random people in Algeria, the French anarcho-communists did not shout “we are against French and Algerian nationalism”, instead they supported the Algerian rebels with concrete actions. The consequences of support were repressions and prison terms. French anarcho-communism was completely crushed. When Israel evicts Palestinian homes and

farms, anarchists do not shout “we are against both Israeli and Palestinian nationalism at the same time”, but oppose the eviction along with the Palestinians.

The consequence of the unlikely but nevertheless possible Russian occupation of Ukraine would be a collaborationist regime, mass repressions (including the destruction of the entire anarchist movement) and the abolition of all civil liberties.

The slogan “no war other than class” does not mean that anarchists must remain neutral in the event of an occupation. This means that we must oppose wars of conquest. Countering Russian aggression is the interest of the working class not only in Ukraine, but also in Russia. With the Nazis, the essence of their ideas is simply sycophancy, and in the event of an occupation, some of them will find themselves in the Quisling chair.

Plus, in the event of war, a detachment of 50 anarchists with firecrackers and slingshots will look simply ridiculous. The regular army of Ukraine is not able to win, but it is able to inflict thousands or even hundreds of thousands of losses on the invaders. Therefore, at the initial stage of a theoretical war, it must be supported.

After the initial stage, in the case of a theoretical occupation, we must already look at the situation. If there is no unified organization of resistance, then, quite possibly, the anarchists should act autonomously. But if there is such a powerful resistance organization as the Polish Home Army was during the Second World War, then the anarchists will need to cooperate with it. This is what the Polish ZSP syndicalists, who took part in the Warsaw Uprising, did in their time. In general, during the Second World War, anarchists in virtually all countries of Europe occupied by the Nazis collaborated with the “mainstream” of the resistance movement, despite the fact that it was under the control of the Stalinists or bourgeois nationalists. In France, anarchist refugees from the Spanish CNT joined the army of “free France” under the leadership of De Gaulle and even liberated Paris — but only because there were racists in the leadership of the allies, and they demanded that white soldiers be the first in Paris, and not black soldiers from African colonies, which made up the majority of the detachments of the “free French” army.

In Russia, anarchists had to criticize the myths around the “Victory Day” a lot. Obviously, in some regions (for example, in Chechnya), Stalin acted no better than Hitler. But in almost every country occupied by the Nazis, anarchists and anti-authoritarians collaborated with the Allies. The only exception I know of is the Dutch Marx-Lenin-Luxembourg Front, which developed from Trotskyism towards Retecommunism [*sic*]. This was a small underground organization of a few dozen or hundreds of members that refused to cooperate with the “mainstream” of the resistance movement, opposed the UK and the Nazis alike, and called “against the defense of the Soviet Union.” In 1942, the Nazis caught and shot the entire leadership of the organization. They had a very principled position, from which no one felt either hot or cold. Less principled anti-authoritarians fared better. For example, Italian anarchist partisans liberated the city of Carrara, which eventually became a powerful center of the anarchist movement. The veterans of the anarchist resistance still failed to restore the former scale of the movement anywhere, but this is hardly due to “unprincipled” cooperation with bourgeois allies.

But these are just curious historical examples. Now Russian occupation of Ukraine seems unlikely, and it is impossible to choose in advance the “correct position” for all possible future scenarios. But there are some requirements that should be put forward here and now. For example, now Germany (and possibly also Finland) is actively preventing even Ukraine’s attempts to arm itself. It is clear that the population of the European Union has no desire to send soldiers to defend Ukraine, and the Ukrainian government does not have the money to arm itself properly.

But refusing even those small sales that the Ukrainian government can afford is a mockery and a game in favor of the Kremlin. Anti-authoritarians in Russia should oppose aggressive gestures, and anti-authoritarians in the EU should oppose sabotage of Ukrainian self-defense.

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