CrimethInc.
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Anti-Authoritarian Perspectives in Ukraine
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nificantly from ordinary Ukrainian political practice, in which it is often proposed to unite around organizations, representatives, or the police. Organizations and representatives are often bribed and the people who have gathered around them remain deceived. The police may, for example, defend LGBT events but get mad if these activists join a riot against police brutality. Actually, this is why we see potential in our ideas—but if a war breaks out, the main thing will again be the ability to participate in armed conflict.

Contents

and Alexei Levkin) and from Europe (such as Denis "White Rex" Kapustin), and even from the USA (Robert Rando). Anarchists have been investigating the activities of the far right.

There are activist groups of various kinds (classical anarchists, queer anarchists, anarcho-feminists, Food Not Bombs, eco-initiatives, and the like), as well as small information platforms. Recently, a politically charged anti-fascist resource has appeared in the telegram @uantifa, duplicating its publications in English.

Today, the tensions between groups are gradually smoothing out, as recently there have been many joint actions and common participation in social conflicts. Among the biggest of these is the campaign against the deportation of the Belarusian anarchist Aleksey Bolenkov (who managed to win a trial against the Ukrainian special services and remain in Ukraine) and the defense of one of the districts in Kyiv (Podil) from police raids and attacks by the ultra-right.

We still have very little influence on society at large. This is largely because the very idea of a need for organization and anarchist structures was ignored or denied for a long time. (In his memoirs, Nestor Makhno also complained about this shortcoming after the defeat of the anarchists). Anarchist groups were very quickly dashed by the SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] or the far right.

Now we have come out of stagnation and are developing, and therefore we are anticipating new repression and new attempts by the SBU to take control of the movement.

At this stage, our role can be described as the most radical approaches and views in the democratic camp. If liberals prefer to complain to the police in the event of an attack by the police or the far right, anarchists offer to cooperate with other groups that suffer from a similar problem and come to the defense of institutions or events if there is a possibility of an attack.

Anarchists are now trying to create horizontal grassroots ties in society, based on common interests, so that communities can address their own needs, including self-defense. This differs sig-

of frustration; the police did not function well, so someone could easily be killed without consequences. For example, in 2015, the pro-Russian activist Oles Buzina was killed.

All this encouraged anarchists to approach the matter more seriously.

A radical underground began to develop starting from 2016; news about radical actions started to appear. Radical anarchist resources appeared that explained how to buy weapons and how to make caches, as opposed to the old ones, which were limited only to Molotov cocktails.

In the anarchist milieu, it has become acceptable to have legal weapons. Videos of anarchist training camps using firearms began to surface. Echoes of these changes reached Russia and Belarus. In Russia, the FSB liquidated a network of anarchist groups that had legal weapons and practiced airsoft. The arrestees were tortured with electric current in order to force them to confess to terrorism, and sentenced to terms ranging from 6 to 18 years. In Belarus, during the 2020 protests, a rebellious group of anarchists under the name "Black Flag" was detained while trying to cross the Belarusian-Ukrainian border. They had a firearm and a grenade with them; according to the testimony of Igor Olinevich, he bought the weapon in Kyiv.

The outdated approach of anarchists' economic agenda has also changed: if before, the majority worked at low-paid jobs "closer to the oppressed," now many are trying to find a job with a good salary, most often in the IT sector.

Street anti-fascist groups have resumed their activities, engaging in retaliatory actions in cases of Nazi attacks. Among other things, they held the "No Surrender" tournament among antifa fighters and released a documentary entitled "Hoods," which tells about the birth of the Kyiv antifa group. (English subtitles are available.)

Anti-fascism in Ukraine is an important front, because in addition to a large number of local ultra-right activists, many notorious Nazis have relocated here from Russia (including Sergei Korotkikh

This text was composed together by several active anti-authoritarian activists from Ukraine. We do not represent one organization, but we came together to write this text and prepare for a possible war.

Besides us, the text was edited by more than ten people, including participants in the events described in the text, journalists who checked the accuracy of our claims, and anarchists from Russia, Belarus, and Europe. We received many corrections and clarifications in order to write the most objective text possible.

If war breaks out, we do not know if the anti-authoritarian movement will survive, but we will try to do so. In the meantime, this text is an attempt to leave the experience that we have accumulated online.

At the moment, the world is actively discussing a possible war between Russia and Ukraine. We need to clarify that the war between Russia and Ukraine has been going on since 2014.

But first things first.

The Maidan Protests in Kyiv

In 2013, mass protests began in Ukraine, triggered by Berkut (police special forces) beating up student protesters who were dissatisfied with the refusal of then-President Viktor Yanukovych to sign the association agreement with the European Union. This beating functioned as a call to action for many segments of society. It became clear to everyone that Yanukovych had crossed the line. The protests ultimately led to the president fleeing.

In Ukraine, these events are called "The Revolution of Dignity." The Russian government presents it as a Nazi coup, a US State Department project, and so on. The protesters themselves were a

motley crowd: far-right activists with their symbols, liberal leaders talking about European values and European integration, ordinary Ukrainians who went out against the government, a few leftists. Anti-oligarchic sentiments dominated among the protesters, while oligarchs who did not like Yanukovych financed the protest because he, along with his inner circle, tried to monopolize big business during his term. That is to say—for other oligarchs, the protest represented a chance to save their businesses. Also, many representatives of mid-size and small businesses participated in the protest because Yanukovych's people did not allow them to work freely, demanding money from them. Ordinary people were dissatisfied with the high level of corruption and arbitrary conduct of the police. The nationalists who opposed Yanukovych on the grounds that he was a pro-Russian politician reasserted themselves significantly. Belarusian and Russian expatriates joined protests, perceiving Yanukovych as a friend of Belarusian and Russian dictators Alexander Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin.

If you have seen videos from the Maidan rally, you might have noticed that the degree of violence was high; the protesters had no place to pull back to, so they had to fight to the bitter end. The Berkut wrapped stun grenades with screw nuts that left splinter wounds after the explosion, hitting people in their eyes; that is why there were many injured people. In the final stages of the conflict, the security forces used military weapons—killing 106 protesters.

In response, the protesters produced DIY grenades and explosives and brought firearms to the Maidan. The manufacturing of Molotov cocktails resembled small divisions.

Contrary to the opinion that the Maidan was a "manipulation by the EU and NATO," supporters of European integration had called for a peaceful protest, deriding militant protesters as stooges. The EU and the United States criticized the seizures of government buildings. Of course, "pro-Western" forces and organizations participated in the protest, but they did not control the entire protest. Various political forces including the far right actively interfered

influence in Ukraine, will cement the current system of "wild capitalism" in the country and make the potential for a social revolution even less feasible. In the system of global capitalism, the flagship of which is the USA as the leader of NATO, Ukraine is assigned the spot of a humble frontier: a supplier of cheap labor and resources. Therefore, it is important for Ukrainian society to realize the need for independence from all the imperialists. In the context of the country's defense capability, the emphasis should not be on the importance of NATO technology and support for the regular army, but on the potential of society for grassroots guerrilla resistance.

We consider this war primarily against Putin and the regimes under his control. In addition to the mundane motivation not to live under a dictatorship, we see potential in Ukrainian society, which is one of the most active, independent, and rebellious in the region. The long history of resistance of the people over the past thirty years is a solid proof of this. This gives us hope that the concepts of direct democracy have a fertile ground here.

The Current Situation of Anarchists in Ukraine and New Challenges

The outsider position during the Maidan and the war had a demoralizing effect on the movement. Outreach was hampered as Russian propaganda monopolized the word "anti-fascism." Due to the presence of the symbols of the USSR among the pro-Russian militants, the attitude towards the word "communism" was extremely negative, so even the combination "anarcho-communism" was perceived negatively. The declarations against the pro-Ukrainian ultra-right cast a shadow of doubt on anarchists in the eyes of ordinary folks. There was an unspoken agreement that the ultra-right would not attack anarchists and anti-fascists if they did not display their symbols at rallies and the like. The right had a lot of weapons in their hands. This situation created a feeling

We consider the slogans "Say No to War" or "The War of Empires" to be ineffectual and populist. The anarchist movement has no influence on the process, so such statements do not change anything at all.

Our position is based on the fact that we do not want to run away, we do not want to be hostages, and we do not want to be killed without a fight. You can look at Afghanistan and understand what "No to War" means: when the Taliban advances, people flee en masse, die in the chaos at the airports, and those who remain are purged. This describes what is happening in Crimea and you can imagine what will happen after the invasion of Russia in other regions of Ukraine.

As for the attitude towards NATO, the authors of this text are divided between two standpoints. Some of us have a positive approach towards this situation. It is obvious that Ukraine cannot counter Russia on its own. Even taking into consideration the large volunteer movement, modern technologies and weapons are needed. Apart from NATO, Ukraine has no other allies who can help with this.

Here, we can recall the story of Syrian Kurdistan. The locals were forced to cooperate with NATO against ISIS—the only alternative was to flee or be killed. We are well aware that support from NATO can disappear very quickly if the West develops new interests or manages to negotiate some compromises with Putin. Even now, the Kurds are forced to cooperate with the Assad regime, understanding that they don't have much of an alternative.

A possible Russian invasion forces the Ukrainian people to look for allies in the fight against Moscow. Not on social media, but in the real world. Anarchists do not have sufficient resources in Ukraine or elsewhere to respond effectively to the invasion of Putin's regime. Therefore, one has to think about accepting support from NATO.

The other standpoint, which others in this writing group subscribe to, is that both NATO and the EU, in strengthening their

in the movement and tried to dictate their agenda. They quickly got their bearings and became an organizing force, thanks to the fact that they created the first combat detachments and invited everyone to join them, training and directing them.

However, none of the forces was absolutely dominant. The main trend was that it was a spontaneous protest mobilization directed against the corrupt and unpopular Yanukovych regime. Perhaps the Maidan can be classified as one of the many "stolen revolutions." The sacrifices and efforts of tens of thousands of ordinary people were usurped by a handful of politicians who made their way to power and control over the economy.

The Role of Anarchists in the Protests of 2014

Despite the fact that anarchists in Ukraine have a long history, during the reign of Stalin, everyone who was connected with the anarchists in any way was repressed and the movement died out, and consequently, the transfer of revolutionary experience ceased. The movement began to recover in the 1980s thanks to the efforts of historians, and in the 2000s it received a big boost due to the development of subcultures and anti-fascism. But in 2014, it was not yet ready for serious historical challenges.

Prior to the beginning of the protests, anarchists were individual activists or scattered in small groups. Few argued that the movement should be organized and revolutionary. Of the well-known organizations that were preparing for such events, there was Makhno Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (RCAS of Makhno), but at the beginning of the riots, it dissolved itself, as the participants could not develop a strategy for the new situation.

The events of the Maidan were like a situation in which the special forces break into your house and you need to take decisive actions, but your arsenal consists only of punk lyrics, veganism,

100-year-old books, and at best, the experience of participating in street anti-fascism and local social conflicts. Consequently, there was a lot of confusion, as people attempted to understand what was happening.

At the time, it was not possible to form a unified vision of the situation. The presence of the far-right in the streets discouraged many anarchists from supporting the protests, as they did not want to stand beside Nazis on the same side of the barricades. This brought a lot of controversy into the movement; some people accused those who did decide to join the protests of fascism.

The anarchists who participated in the protests were dissatisfied with the brutality of the police and with Yanukovych himself and his pro-Russian position. However, they could not have a significant impact on the protests, as they were essentially in the category of outsiders.

In the end, anarchists participated in the Maidan revolution individually and in small groups, mainly in volunteer/non-militant initiatives. After a while, they decided to cooperate and make their own "hundred" (a combat group of 60–100 people). But during the registration of the detachment (a mandatory procedure on the Maidan), the outnumbered anarchists were dispersed by the far-right participants with weapons. The anarchists remained, but no longer attempted to create large organized groups.

Among those killed on the Maidan was the anarchist Sergei Kemsky who was, ironically, ranked as postmortem Hero of Ukraine. He was shot by a sniper during the heated phase of the confrontation with the security forces. During the protests, Sergei put forward an appeal to the protesters entitled "Do you hear it, Maidan?" in which he outlined possible ways of developing the revolution, emphasizing the aspects of direct democracy and social transformation.

analysts are unlikely to be able to predict exactly when it will start. Perhaps a revolution in Russia would relieve tension in the region; however, as we wrote above, the protest movement there has been smothered.

Anarchists in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia mostly support Ukrainian independence directly or implicitly. This is because, even with all the national hysteria, corruption, and a large number of Nazis, compared to Russia and the countries controlled by it, Ukraine looks like an island of freedom. This country retains such "unique phenomena" in the post-Soviet region as the replaceability of the president, a parliament that has more than nominal power, and the right to peaceful assembly; in some cases, factoring in additional attention from society, the courts sometimes even function according to their professed protocol. To say that this is preferable to the situation in Russia is not to say anything new. As Bakunin wrote, "We are firmly convinced that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy."

There are many problems inside Ukraine, but these problems are more likely to be solved without the intervention of Russia.

Is it worth it to fight the Russian troops in the case of an invasion? We believe that the answer is yes. The options that Ukrainian anarchists are considering at the present moment include joining the armed forces of Ukraine, engaging in territorial defense, partisanship, and volunteering.

Ukraine is now at the forefront of the struggle against Russian imperialism. Russia has long-term plans to destroy democracy in Europe. We know that little attention has yet been paid to this danger in Europe. But if you follow the statements of high-profile politicians, far-right organizations, and authoritarian communists, over time, you will notice that there is already a large spy network in Europe. For example, some top officials, after leaving office, are given a position in a Russian oil company (Gerhard Schröder, François Fillon).

When they do engage in military operations, they do so somewhere far away from Europe. But when it comes to Russia, we have witnessed the occupation of Crimea and subsequent fake referendums, the war in Donbas, and the MH17 plane crash. Ukraine constantly experiences hacker attacks and bomb threats, not only in state buildings but also inside the schools and kindergartens.

In Belarus in 2020, Lukashenka boldly declared himself the winner of the elections with a result of 80% of the vote. The uprising in Belarus even led to a strike of Belarusian propagandists. But after the landing of Russian FSB planes, the situation changed dramatically and the Belarusian government succeeded in violently suppressing the protests.

A similar scenario played out in Kazakhstan, but there, the regular armies of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan were brought in to help the regime suppress the revolt as part of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) cooperation.

Russian special services lured refugees from Syria to Belarus in order to create a conflict on the border with the European Union. A group of the Russian FSB was also uncovered that was engaged in political assassinations using chemical weapons—the already familiar "novichok." In addition to the Skripals and Navalny, they have also killed other political figures in Russia. Putin's regime responds to all accusations by saying "It's not us, you all are lying." Meanwhile, Putin himself wrote an article half a year ago in which he asserts that Russians and Ukrainians are one nation and should be together. Vladislav Surkov (a political strategist who builds Russian state policy, connected with the puppet governments in the so-called DNR and LNR) published an article declaring that "the empire must expand, otherwise it will perish." In Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan over the past two years, the protest movement has been brutally suppressed and independent and opposition media are being destroyed.

All things considered, the likelihood of a full-scale war is high—and somewhat higher this year than last year. Even the sharpest

The beginning of the War: The Annexation of Crimea

The armed conflict with Russia began eight years ago on the night of February 26–27, 2014, when the Crimean Parliament building and the Council of Ministers were seized by unknown armed men. They used Russian weapons, uniforms, and equipment but did not have the symbols of the Russian army. Putin did not recognize the fact of the participation of the Russian militarys in this operation, although he later admitted it personally in the documentary propaganda film "Crimea: The way to the Homeland".

Here, one needs to understand that during the time of Yanukovych, the Ukrainian army was in very poor condition. Knowing that there was a regular Russian army of 220,000 soldiers operating in Crimea, the provisional government of Ukraine did not dare to confront it.

After the occupation, many residents have faced repression that continues to this day. Our comrades are also among the repressed. We can briefly review some of the most high-profile cases. Anarchist Alexander Kolchenko was arrested along with pro-democratic activist Oleg Sentsov and transferred to Russia on September 6, 2019; five years later, they were released as a result of a prisoner exchange. Anarchist Alexei Shestakovich was tortured, suffocated with a plastic bag on his head, beaten, and threatened with reprisals; he managed to escape. Anarchist Evgeny Karakashev was arrested in 2018 for a re-post on Vkontakte (a social network); he remains in custody.

Disinformation

Pro-Russian rallies were held in Russian-speaking cities close to the Russian border. The participants feared NATO, radical nationalists, and repression targeting the Russian-speaking population. After

the collapse of the USSR, many households in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus had family ties, but the events of the Maidan caused a serious split in personal relations. Those who were outside Kyiv and watched Russian TV were convinced that Kyiv had been captured by a Nazi junta and that there were purges of the Russian-speaking population there.

Russia launched a propaganda campaign using the following messaging: "punishers," i.e., Nazis, are coming from Kyiv to Donetsk, they want to destroy the Russian-speaking population (although Kyiv is also a predominantly Russian-speaking city). In their disinformation statements, the propagandists used photos of the far right and spread all kinds of fake news. During the hostilities, one of the most notorious hoaxes appeared: the so-called crucifixion of a three-year-old boy who was allegedly attached to a tank and dragged along the road. In Russia, this story was broadcasted on federal channels and went viral on the Internet.

In 2014, in our opinion, disinformation played a key role in generating the armed conflict: some residents of Donetsk and Lugansk were scared that they would be killed, so they took up arms and called for Putin's troops.

Armed Conflict in the East of Ukraine

"The trigger of the war was pulled," in his own words, by Igor Girkin, a colonel of the FSB (the state security agency, successors to the KGB) of the Russian Federation. Girkin, a supporter of Russian imperialism, decided to radicalize the pro-Russian protests. He crossed the border with an armed group of Russians and (on April 12, 2014) seized the Interior Ministry building in Slavyansk to take possession of weapons. Pro-Russian security forces began to join Girkin. When information about Girkin's armed groups appeared, Ukraine announced an anti-terrorist operation.

FSB approached local anti-fascists and anarchists in conversation, offering to permit them to continue their activities but suggesting that they should henceforward include the idea that Crimea should be a part of Russia in their agitation. In Ukraine, there are small informational and activist groups that position themselves as anti-fascist while expressing an essentially pro-Russian position; many people suspect them of working for Russia. Their influence is minimal in Ukraine, but their members serve Russian propagandists as "whistleblowers."

There are also offers of "cooperation" from the Russian embassy and pro-Russian members of Parliament like Ilya Kiva. They try to play on the negative attitude towards Nazis like the Azov battalion and offer to pay people to change their position. At the moment, only Rita Bondar has openly admitted to receiving money in this way. She used to write for left-wing and anarchist media outlets, but due to the need for money, she wrote under a pseudonym for media platforms affiliated with the Russian propagandist Dmitry Kiselev.

In Russia itself, we are witnessing the elimination of the anarchist movement and the rise of authoritarian communists who are ousting anarchists from the anti-fascist subculture. One of the most indicative recent moments is the organizing of an anti-fascist tournament in 2021 in memory of "the Soviet soldier."

Is There a Threat of Full-Scale War with Russia? An Anarchist Position

About ten years ago, the idea of a full-scale war in Europe would have seemed crazy, since secular European states in the 21st century seek to play up their "humanism" and mask their crimes.

Russia's authoritarian communists embraced the breakaway republics for similar reasons.

The presence of far-right supporters in the Maidan also motivated apolitical anti-fascists to support the "DNR" and "LNR." Again, some of them participated in the fighting in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and some of them died there.

Among Ukrainian anti-fascists, there were "apolitical" anti-fascists, subculturally affiliated people who had a negative attitude towards fascism "because our grandfathers fought against it." Their understanding of fascism was abstract: they themselves were often politically incoherent, sexist, homophobic, patriots of Russia, and the like.

The idea of supporting the so-called republics gained wide backing among the left in Europe. Most notable among its supporters were the Italian rock band "Banda Bassotti" and the German party Die Linke. In addition to fundraising, Banda Bassotti made a tour to "Novorossia." Being in the European Parliament, Die Linke supported the pro-Russian narrative in every possible way and arranged video conferences with pro-Russian militants, going to Crimea and the unrecognized republics. The younger members of Die Linke, as well as the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation (the Die Linke party foundation), maintain that this position is not shared by every participant, but it is broadcasted by the most prominent members of the party, such as Sahra Wagenknecht and Sevim Dağdelen.

The pro-Russian position did not gain popularity among anarchists. Among individual statements, the most visible was the position of Jeff Monson, a mixed martial arts fighter from the USA who has tattoos with anarchist symbols. He previously considered himself an anarchist, but in Russia, he openly works for the ruling United Russia party and serves as a deputy in the Duma.

To summarize the pro-Russian "left" camp, we see the work of the Russian special services and the consequences of ideological incapacity. After the occupation of Crimea, employees of the Russian

A part of Ukrainian society determined to protect national sovereignty, realizing that the army had poor capacity, organized a large volunteer movement. Those who were somewhat competent in military affairs became instructors or formed volunteer battalions. Some people joined the regular army and volunteer battalions as humanitarian volunteers. They raised funds for weapons, food, ammunition, fuel, transport, renting civil cars, and the like. Often, the participants in the volunteer battalions were armed and equipped better than the soldiers of the state army. These detachments demonstrated a significant level of solidarity and self-organization and actually replaced the state functions of territorial defense, enabling the army (which was poorly equipped at that time) to successfully resist the enemy.

The territories controlled by pro-Russian forces began to shrink rapidly. Then the regular Russian army intervened.

We can highlight three key chronological points:

1. The Ukrainian military realized that weapons, volunteers, and military specialists were coming from Russia. Therefore, on July 12, 2014, they began an operation on the Ukrainian-Russian border. However, during the military march, the Ukrainian military was attacked by Russian artillery and the operation failed. The armed forces sustained heavy losses.

2. The Ukrainian military attempted to occupy Donetsk. While they were advancing, they were surrounded by Russian regular troops near Ilovaisk. People we know, who were part of one of the volunteer battalions, were also captured. They saw the Russian military firsthand. After three months, they managed to return as the result of an exchange of prisoners of war.

3. The Ukrainian army controlled the city of Debaltseve, which had a large railway junction. This disrupted the direct road linking Donetsk and Lugansk. On the eve of the negotiations

between Poroshenka (the president of Ukraine at that time) and Putin, which were supposed to begin a long-term ceasefire, Ukrainian positions were attacked by units with the support of Russian troops. The Ukrainian army was again surrounded and sustained heavy losses.

For the time being (as of February 2022), the parties have agreed on a ceasefire and a conditional "peace and quiet" order, which is maintained, though there are consistent violations. Several people die every month.

Russia denies the presence of regular Russian troops and the supply of weapons to territories uncontrolled by the Ukrainian authorities. The Russian military who were captured claim that they were put on alert for a drill, and only when they arrived at their destination did they realize that they were in the middle of the war in Ukraine. Before crossing the border, they removed the symbols of the Russian army, the way their colleagues did in Crimea. In Russia, journalists have found cemeteries of fallen soldiers, but all information about their deaths is unknown: the epitaphs on the headstones only indicate the dates of their deaths as the year 2014.

Supporters of the Unrecognized Republics

The ideological basis of the opponents of the Maidan was also diverse. The main unifying ideas were discontent with violence against the police and opposition to rioting in Kyiv. People who were brought up with Russian cultural narratives, movies, and music were afraid of the destruction of the Russian language. Supporters of the USSR and admirers of its victory in World War II believed that Ukraine should be aligned with Russia and were unhappy with the rise of radical nationalists. Adherents of the Russian Empire perceived the Maidan protests as a threat to the territory of the Russian Empire. The ideas of these allies could be explained with this photo showing the flags of the USSR, the

Pro-Russians

Modern Russian imperialism is built on the perception that Russia is the successor of the USSR—not in its political system, but on territorial grounds. The Putin regime sees the Soviet victory in World War II not as an ideological victory over Nazism, but as a victory over Europe that shows the strength of Russia. In Russia and the countries it controls, the population has less access to information, so Putin's propaganda machine does not bother to create a complex political concept. The narrative is essentially as follows: The USA and Europe were afraid of the strong USSR, Russia is the successor of the USSR and the entire territory of the former USSR is Russian, Russian tanks entered Berlin, which means that "We can do it again" and we'll show NATO who is the strongest here, the reason Europe is "rotting" is because all of the gays and emigrants are out of control there.

The ideological foundation maintaining a pro-Russian position among the left was the legacy of the USSR and its victory in World War II. Since Russia clams that the government in Kyiv was seized by Nazis and the junta, the opponents of the Maidan described themselves as fighters against fascism and the Kyiv junta. This branding induced sympathy among the authoritarian left—for example, in Ukraine, including the "Borotba" organization. During the most significant events of 2014, they first took a loyalist position and then later a pro-Russian position. In Odessa, on May 2, 2014, several of their activists were killed during street riots. Some people from this group also participated in the fighting in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and some of them died there.

"Borotba" described their motivation as wishing to fight against fascism. They urged the European left to stand in solidarity with the "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic." After the e-mail of Vladislav Surkov (Putin's political strategist) was hacked, it was revealed that members of Borotba had received funding and were supervised by Surkov's people.

People who didn't take part in the battles raised funds for the rehabilitation of people injured in the East and for the construction of a bomb shelter in a kindergarten located near the front line. There was also a squat named "Autonomy" in Kharkiv, an open anarchist social and cultural center; at that time, they concentrated on helping the refugees. They provided housing and a permanent really free market, consulting with new arrivals and directing them to resources and conducting educational activities. In addition, the center became a place for theoretical discussions. Unfortunately, in 2018, the project ceased to exist.

All these actions were the individual initiatives of particular people and groups. They did not happen within the framework of a single strategy.

One of the most significant phenomena of that period was a formerly large radical nationalist organization, "Autonomnyi Opir"(autonomous resistance). They started leaning left in 2012; by 2014, they had shifted so much to the left that individual members would even call themselves "anarchists." They framed their nationalism as a struggle for "liberty" and a counterbalance to Russian nationalism, using the Zapatista movement and the Kurds as role models. Compared to the other projects in Ukrainian society, they were seen as the closest allies, so some anarchists cooperated with them, while others criticized this cooperation and the organization itself. Members of the AO also actively participated in volunteer battalions and tried to develop the idea of "anti-imperialism" among the military. They also defended the right of women to participate in the war; female members of the AO participated in the combat operations. AO assisted training centers in training fighters and doctors, volunteered for the army, and organized the social center"Citadel" in Lviv where refugees were accommodated.

Russian Empire, and the St. George ribbon as a symbol of victory in the Second World War. We could portray them as authoritarian conservatives, supporters of the old order.

The pro-Russian side consisted of police, entrepreneurs, politicians, and the military who sympathized with Russia, ordinary citizens frightened by fake news, various ultra-right indivisuals including Russian patriots and various types of monarchists, pro-Russian imperialists, the Task Force group "Rusich," the PMC [Private Military Company] group "Wagner," including the notorious neo-Nazi Alexei Milchakov, the recently deceased Egor Prosvirnin, the founder of the chauvinistic Russian nationalist media project "Sputnik and Pogrom," and many others. There were also authoritarian leftists, who celebrate the USSR and its victory in the Second World War.

The Rise of the Far Right in Ukraine

As we described, the right wing managed to gain sympathy during the Maidan by organizing combat units and by being ready to physically confront the Berkut. The presence of military arms enabled them to maintain their independence and force others to reckon with them. In spite of their using overt fascist symbols such as swastikas, wolf hooks, Celtic crosses, and SS logos, it was difficult to discredit them, as the need to fight the forces of the Yanukovych government caused many Ukrainians to call for cooperation with them.

After the Maidan, the right wing actively suppressed the rallies of pro-Russian forces. At the beginning of the military operations, they started forming volunteer battalions. One of the most famous is the "Azov" battalion. At the beginning, it consisted of 70 fighters; now it is a regiment of 800 people with its own armored vehicles, artillery, tank company, and a separate project in accordance with NATO standards, the sergeant school. The Azov battalion is one

of the most combat-effective units in the Ukrainian army. There were also other fascist military formations such as the Volunteer Ukrainian Unit "Right Sector" and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, but they are less widely known.

As a consequence, the Ukrainian right wing accrued a bad reputation in the Russian media. But many in Ukraine considered what was hated in Russia to be a symbol of struggle in Ukraine. For example, the name of the nationalist Stepan Bandera, who is considered a Nazi collaborator in Russia, was actively used by the protesters as a form of mockery. Some called themselves Judeo-Banderans to troll supporters of Jewish/Masonic conspiracy theories.

Over time, the trolling got out of control. Right-wingers openly wore Nazi symbols; ordinary supporters of the Maidan claimed that they were themselves Banderans who eat Russian babies and made memes to that effect. The far right made its way into the mainstream: they were invited to participate in television shows and other corporate media platforms, on which they were presented as patriots and nationalists. Liberal supporters of the Maidan took their side, believing that the Nazis were a hoax invented by Russian media. In 2014 to 2016, anyone who was ready to fight was embraced, whether it was a Nazi, an anarchist, a kingpin from an organized crime syndicate, or a politician who did not carry out any of his promises.

The rise of the far right is due to the fact that they were better organized in critical situations and were able to suggest effective methods of fighting to other rebels. Anarchists provided something similar in Belarus, where they also managed to gain the sympathy of the public, but not on as significant of a scale as the far right did in Ukraine.

By 2017, after the ceasefire started and the need for radical fighters decreased, the SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) and the state government co-opted the right-wing movement, jailing or neutralizing anyone who had an "anti-system" or independent perspective

on how to develop the right-wing movement—including Oleksandr Muzychko, Oleg Muzhchil, Yaroslav Babich, and others.

Today, it is still a big movement, but their popularity is at a comparably low level and their leaders are affiliated with the Security service, police, and politicians; they do not represent a really independent political force. The discussions of the problem of the far-right are becoming more frequent within the democratic camp, where people are developing an understanding of the symbols and organizations they are dealing with, rather than silently dismissing concerns.

Anarchists' and Anti-Fascists' Activity during the War

With the outbreak of military operations, a division appeared between those who are pro-Ukrainian and those who support the so-called DNR/LNR ("Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic").

There was a widespread "say no to war" sentiment within the punk scene during the first months of the war, but it did not last long. Let's analyze the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian camps.

Pro-Ukrainians

Due to the lack of a massive organization, the first anarchist and anti-fascist volunteers went to war individually as single fighters, military medics, and volunteers. They tried to form their own squad, but due to lack of knowledge and resources, this attempt was unsuccessful. Some even joined the Azov battalion and the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists). The reasons were mundane: they joined the most accessible troops. Consequently, some people converted to right-wing politics.