

Frontline solidarity at 89 seconds to midnight

As war profiteering nuclear tyrants promise arms-deal apocalypse, anarchists continue to resist in Ukraine

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On the east coast of the United States of America a deal is going down. For the past week Ukrainian ministers have flown from Kyiv to Washington to discuss the exchange of drones for tomahawk missiles. This weekend Trump and Zelensky will meet to finalise the movement of long-range missiles to Ukraine, and the cut throat discount on Ukrainian-manufactured drones sold to the U.S. at 20% the going rate. The art of this arms deal is a threat.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said in response that the transfer of missiles would be “a qualitatively different level of escalation” as he claimed it would require U.S. army personnel on Ukrainian territory to operate the missiles. The armed forces of Russia launched over 71 missiles across the frontline on 5 and 10 October, along with hundreds of drones directly targeting the energy sector of Ukraine. The military have continued to bombard Ukraine with these mass drone and rocket attacks as Zelensky arrives in D.C.

Among those killed was a 15-year-old girl with her family in Lviv Oblast, and a 71-year-old man who was sitting in a civilian train carriage in Sumy when it was attacked by Russian drones.

Hundreds of items transported by Boeing and Airbus have made their way to Russia, according to customs data analysed by Investigate Europe. Some of the subsidiaries from India are themselves on sanctions lists for transporting military personnel into the DPR and other Russian occupied territories. All western companies deny knowledge of committing any crime.

“The willingness of the groups management to supply ammunition even to warring nations,” wrote Otfried Nassauer, the late German peace campaigner, “and states that blatantly disregard human rights, is an essential prerequisite for the economic success of Rheinmetall’s ammunition business.”

From Indonesia to Yemen via South African subsidiaries, Germany’s largest weapons manufacturer is attempting to repeat it’s historical economic successes of the first and second world war by arming the world through a shadow export business. Rheinmetall call this blatant war profiteering “taking responsibility in a changing world” as the company profits have multiplied following the outbreak of the Russian war in Ukraine.

International support for Ukraine has been fickle. While western nations promise their support for Ukraine in the defense of Europe, arms-dealers are continuing to subvert international sanctions through third party countries. Ammunition produced by Rheinmetall is making its way

into the hands of those resisting tyranny and occupation around the world. Flights with western cargo are continuing to land in Russia. Profit trumps peace, after all.

In Berlin, the air-raid siren is blaring with the beeping of phones marking the emergency tone. The trams are painted camouflage and posters for political parties are replaced with recruitment for the security services. Germany is slashing social security and its arms manufacturer is making a killing.

The lights go out in Ukraine but the residents of Europe are still sleeping, dancing a conscious delirium that now threatens to consume us all. As the Doomsday clock reaches 89 seconds to midnight, how long until we are awoken by the sound of bombs?

“Everything is as pleasant and beautiful as possible,” Gera says walking through a park, on the frontline of the impossible spring of our waking nightmares. It is calm and peaceful. The sound of birds fill the air. Bakhmut has roses and Gera is eating a falafel. “Another interesting thing about the psyche...” Greta says, picking up a medic pack and rifle resting by the tree.

“When you fall asleep in such conditions on the frontline you usually have very good and pleasant dreams, things I don’t have in my normal life, the complete opposite of all the horrors that is... and this is interrupted when I am woken up. Because I am a medic rifleman. When I hear that one of our guys has been wounded I have to quickly get my shit together to help him.”

Gera is awake, moving into position on the frontline with a comrade. Something felt wrong. A Russian soldier ambushes their position and throws a grenade, destroying Gera’s automatic machine gun. Grot had managed to wound the Russian soldier, Gera tells Solidarity Collectives. It probably saved their life.

Grot “had been hit by a bullet and had multiple shrapnel wounds,” Gera says. “I thought he was dead... I think the experience could have had a strong impact on my perception because it felt like I had died at that moment. I thought that was it. I didn’t expect to get out of there and survive... that moment was psychologically tough.”

After being deployed to Klishchiivka close to Bakhmut, Gera requested rehabilitation in Odessa. “As a medic I provided assistance to both comrades and allies, but this deployment was simply ineffective,” Gera says. “I spent 8 days in a basement, completely confused because drones filled the entire space and field.”

Solidarity Collectives have interviewed international anarchist medics in Ukraine since 2022, and spoke to Charlie this year. “During work, there is no space for anything but work,” Charlie says, “I mean when we have a wounded person and we need to, you know, do something about it, stop the bleeding and all that, this is what you do and it has nothing to do with politics.”

“The fact that I’m here, it’s already connected with the fact I’m an anarchist and believe in solidarity with the people... all the decisions I make, they actually come from what I believe in and what I think is right.” Charlie started working as a medic on the frontlines with anti-authoritarian units in the armed forces of Ukraine and has been there since 2022.

“I actually came to Poland for a short holiday for just a couple of weeks to see my friends,” says Charlie. “We got up in the morning and saw the news and I realised that I am not going back. I’m not going back to Belarus. I am not going home because it was just impossible for me. My country was bombing another country.”

“Very often anarchist movement becomes extremely marginalised and impenetrable for people from outside,” Charlie reflects. “Anarchism and feminism and veganism, for me it’s first of all not struggle but first of all it is care. Care for people, care for women, care for animals and on the second place it is struggle. Very often activists are caught in this struggle and forget about care.”

“The deepest feelings, of course, I have towards Bakhmut,” Charlie says.

“I remember it as an extremely beautiful city with a very beautiful cape. Like, there were these swans and this nice river and full of roses. I arrived there at the end of summer, the weather was beautiful and it was all green and there were many flowers. So I have a strong bond with the city, completely destroyed now, just a graveyard... we lost a lot of comrades and Marcy isn't with us today.”

Marcy was a gardener from London who came to Ukraine to support people during the invasion. He drove an ambulance with Charlie as a volunteer in Bakhmut. After joining the armed forces he was killed in Avdiika. “The vast majority of people we are picking up from the front-line”, said Marcy back in 2022, “who have horrific wounds are ordinary working people. I think they should ask for free healthcare and free education after this is done because I smell that blood everyday and they have paid...”

“They should see all the desperate people in Bakhmut, who don't have anything as civilians,” Marcy reminded us, “just been left behind there.”

Solidarity Collectives work alongside Solidrones for the construction and assembly of UAV drones, as communities seek to defend themselves rather than wait for the delivery of tomahawk missiles. What does victory look like when we fight for our freedom?

“I really want people to win,” says Charlie. “Not the governments. Screw governments. I want people just to breathe freely without being afraid to be killed by some random aviabomb.”

For the last 20 months, the frontline has been moving towards the mining town of Dobroshillja, with an attack on a market and shopping centre in July causing the authorities to evacuate most of the population of the mining town. The Russian Federation currently occupies around 70% of the Donetsk Oblast in the east of Ukraine, declaring a de facto client state along with other territories in 2014. Those who have escaped are finding themselves constantly bombarded.

“For ordinary people like us, it's just misery,” Ivan told Медузы (Meduza). “So now, I'm about to leave with my wife. She packed herself a bag full of medicine, and well we're heading out. My wife hasn't slept for three nights. She is afraid of everything,” he said. Those who remained in the town despite the danger where the elderly, the disabled and internally displaced persons from Bakhmut.

On the other side of the frontline, a show trial is commencing for the second time. As observed by Медиазона (Mediazona), at least 26 prisoners of war were convicted by the Supreme Court of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) multiple times for the same crime. Among the prisoners of war were former Azov brigade fighters, six convicted for the same act of terrorism on two occasions.

A lawyer working in Donetsk has commented that by bringing repeated cases against far-right Ukrainian soldiers, Russia could “justify the invasion” under its own propaganda to portray Ukraine “as a nationalist and pro-fascist state,” the legal worker testified under anonymity. This violation of the law has become established practice in the show trials of prisoners of war.

In the Russian occupied city of Enerhodar, the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant has been running on back-up generators for almost a month since it was severed from the electric grid following continuous shelling in and around the plant. “This is an extraordinarily challenging situation,” said International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, as Europe's largest nuclear power station is now kept from meltdown by eight diesel engines.

In the early days of the Russian occupation of Enerhodar, an anti-fascist punk spoke of collaborators, arrests and interrogations by Russian soldiers, including staged photographs of an underground far-right element as ‘proof’ of the need to de-nazify Ukraine according to Russian state propaganda. These photographs and videos are then disseminated for both Russian and western audiences, appealing paradoxically to those whose politics are the polar opposite to the Russian Federation.

“I think there is quite a big resistance against understanding the situation in Eastern Europe,” Belarusian anarchist Nikita Ivansky tells me. “Certain dogmas used within anarchist and left circles are not working in such a complicated situation. Instead of adapting the ideological ground for such a conflict and applying our values within the conflict – and find our place according to those political values – a lot of people try to stick to those written political ideas from the past”.

“Anarchist movement has no mechanisms of dealing with disinformation – It is very easy to plant a certain narrative delivered via state propaganda channels and make it grow without serious push back,” Nikita writes. “The discussion about Maidan in 2014 is one of those perfect examples.”

The fetishisation of far-right Ukrainian Nazi groups in certain ‘left’ publications risks blinding us to the actions of those putting anarchism into action on the frontline. Even in the western anarchist movement there are some who echo the paranoia of the Russian Federation in labelling the Maidan Uprising as a Nazi putsch, like a judge at the Supreme Court of the DPR.

But away from headlines that promise apocalypse and despair from nuclear tyrants, anarchism continues to fight on the frontlines. Anti-authoritarian fighters are continuing to resist Russian occupation, as well as supporting internally displaced people and abandoned animals with mutual aid across the country. In the predictable failure of the charity of nuclear tyranny and the security of borders over solidarity with the people – all we have to fight for is each other.

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