

# **Revolutionary Action (Rev Dia)**

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## Overview & Introduction

Rev Dia (RD), known in English as ‘Revolutionary Action’, is an anarchist group with influence primarily spanning the former soviet states of Belarus and Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> RD was formed after a meeting in a Minsk café on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005. They were initially established as a part of the libertarian-communist movement Autonomous Action. However, RD would later go on to become an independent organization in order to focus more on direct action and anarcho-activism.<sup>2</sup> Using its website and social media accounts, RD aims to unite members of the anarchist movement in an attempt to concentrate their efforts in a singular direction and provide a platform to spread anarchist ideas.<sup>3</sup> Taking part in political actions such as Chernobyl Way, The Maidan, and the 2020 Belarus election protests, RD has proven itself to be a consistent and sometimes violent part of social revolts in the region.<sup>4</sup>

Although they often ally with non-anarchist political movements, RD claims these actions are purely strategic; these alliances support the group’s struggle to shift their countries’ ideological tendencies away from what they view as restrictive, authoritarian laws which limit their ability to operate openly.<sup>5</sup> Currently, RD works underground by spraying pro-anarchist graffiti and displaying banners in major metropolitan areas of Belarus and Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> The increasing influence of neo-nazi ideology in their communities has also motivated RD to conduct attacks on known neo-nazi figures and hold training to familiarize members with firearms, hand-to-hand combat, and protest tactics.<sup>7</sup> This training materialized in 2022, when some members volunteered to fight for Ukraine against Russia due to fears of similar invasions being carried out on other former-Soviet states.<sup>8</sup>

## History & Foundations

Belarus and Ukraine are two countries with long and varied histories with anarchy. Nestor Makhno and anti-government punk bands like Mister X, for instance, are some of the most notable references when overviewing these countries’ anarchist figures.<sup>9</sup> This history – along with the politically active post-Soviet world – motivated members from the Belarusian Anarchist Front and individuals from the hardcore punk music scene to open their own Autonomous Action branch in Minsk, in February 2005. Under the name of Autonomous Action Belarus (AD-Belarus), and with a size of fewer than ten members, they began developing a website to draw

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<sup>1</sup> Rev Dia. “History.” Револуцыйна Дія, January 21, 2020. revdia.org.

<sup>2</sup> Rev Dia Belarus. “RD Belarus History.” Револуцыйнае Дзейства. Accessed October 13, 2022. revbel.org.

<sup>3</sup> Rev Dia. “Organizational Principles and Goals of Revolutionary Action.” Револуцыйна Дія, July 2, 2019. revdia.org.

<sup>4</sup> Rev Dia. “Organizational Principles and Goals of Revolutionary Action.” Револуцыйна Дія, July 2, 2019. revdia.org.

<sup>5</sup> Hanrahan, Jake. *Uprising in Belarus*. YouTube. Popular Front, 2020. www.youtube.com.

<sup>6</sup> Rev Dia. “Kyiv Anarchists Painted Graffiti in Memory of Mykhailo Zhlobytskyi.” Револуцыйна Дія, November 11, 2021. revdia.org.

<sup>7</sup> Rev Dia Belarus. “RD Belarus History.” Револуцыйнае Дзейства. Accessed October 13, 2022. revbel.org.

<sup>8</sup> Rev Dia. “Why Do Anarchists Go to War?” Револуцыйна Дія, March 13, 2022. revdia.org.

<sup>9</sup> Guthier, Steven L., and Michael Palij. “The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution.” *Russian Review* 37, no. 1 (1978): 96. doi.org.

attention to anarchists' actions. Offline, AD-Belarus would promote itself at punk concerts by handing out literature.

The group quickly gained traction through its website and activity at the 2005 Chernobyl-Way rallies, causing a subsequent influx of applicants and members into the organization. AD-Belarus' original strategy was to create a network of every like-minded anarchist possible. However, the lack of consistently-active members caused the group to enact stricter policies, such as a probationary period for applicants and blacklisting alcohol abusers. During political actions in late 2007 and early 2008, anarchist protesters engaged in fights and direct confrontation with neo-nazi protesters AD-Belarus responded to the criticism that ensued by adopting a more militant approach, establishing a set of rules meant to change the public view of the group, from that of a subculture to that of an organized resistance. This shift in image led AD-Belarus to distance itself from the pacifist-minded strategies of Autonomous Action and caused them to launch their own organization, Revolutionary Action.<sup>10</sup>

## Objectives & Ideology

Compared to other anarchist organizations that reside in former Soviet states, RD aims to separate itself from the western style of cultural anarchism. Instead, the group opts for social anarchism which focuses more on mutual aid such as protest protection.<sup>11</sup> The authoritarian nature of the Ukrainian and Belarusian governments has caused RD to adopt an illegalist ideology.<sup>12</sup> This means the group will actively go against the law by partaking in illegal demonstrations and vandalism to promote resistance.<sup>13</sup> RD hopes that by providing assistance to political movements, spreading literature, and showing resistance to the government, they will be able to inspire revolution – an element of societal revolt that they view as the foundations to a potential world-anarchist society.<sup>14</sup>

## Militant Abilities

Rev Dia works primarily as an underground organization. Instead of operating through a large overarching organization structure, RD has opted for the ability to operate through small, well-organized cells. Each cell member is responsible for a specific task, such as government agitation, writing articles, participating in protests, designing brochures, or organizing lectures.<sup>15</sup> This division into multiple 'cells' allows Rev Dia members to prioritize their reach in a specific community, while also having the network of a national organization. The benefits of this network are shown by their annual training camps, where different cells meet to conduct combat

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<sup>10</sup> Rev Dia Belarus. "RD Belarus History." Революционное Действие. Accessed October 13, 2022. revbel.org.

<sup>11</sup> Rev Dia Belarus. "RD Belarus History." Революционное Действие. Accessed October 13, 2022. revbel.org.

<sup>12</sup> Rev Dia. "Organizational Principles and Goals of Revolutionary Action." Революційна Дія, July 2, 2019. revdia.org.

<sup>13</sup> *Анархісти Нанесли Візит До Приймальні Білецького.* YouTube. Rev Dia, 2018. www.youtube.com.

<sup>14</sup> Rev Dia. "Organizational Principles and Goals of Revolutionary Action." Революційна Дія, July 2, 2019. revdia.org.

<sup>15</sup> Rev Dia. "Organizational Principles and Goals of Revolutionary Action." Революційна Дія, July 2, 2019. revdia.org.

drills, hold discussions on doctrine, and make acquaintances with other members.<sup>16</sup> The information gained at these camps allows participants to return to their cells to help organize anarchist campaigns and even attacks on political adversaries which are relevant to achieving the goals discussed during the camp.

## Approach to Resistance

Due to RD's illegalist component, the group's approach to resistance most notably consists of vandalism, illegal demonstrations, and occasional assaults.<sup>17</sup> RD has posted media of members targeting government buildings with arson attacks and beating neo-nazi figures with batons.<sup>18</sup> In metropolitan areas such as Kharkiv or Minsk, Rev Dia has plastered flyers, graffiti, and banners promoting the group's views. Online, RD members write articles that criticize government figures and raise awareness for political prisoners.<sup>19</sup> Offline members hold and organize anti-government marches and protest outside of jails. For instance, RD members protested outside of the prison holding Azat Miftakhov – a Moscow State University student who was arrested under suspicion of trying to construct an explosive, but many believed was framed because he held anarchist views.<sup>20</sup>

## Alliances & Relations

Since the start of the 2022 Conflict in Ukraine, some RD members have joined a Ukrainian Territorial Defense Force (TDF) unit, which labels itself as an anarchist/anti-fascist unit.<sup>21</sup> Outside of this TDF, Rev Dia has also worked with members of the Anarcha Autonome movement in France to hold a benefit concert for the people of Ukraine.<sup>22</sup> Besides these instances, RD tends not to report on its partnerships, presumably to remain underground.

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<sup>16</sup> Rev Dia. "Camp of Ukrainian Anarchists 2020." *Революційна Дія*, August 31, 2020. revdia.org.

<sup>17</sup> *Overview of Anarchist Actions in Brest and the Region (Video)*. *Youtube*. Rev Dia, 2015. www.youtube.com.

<sup>18</sup> *Акції Солідарності з Політв'язнями в Києві*. *YouTube*. YouTube, 2019. www.youtube.com.

<sup>19</sup> Rev Dia. "Avakov Left. What's next?" *Революційна Дія*, July 17, 2021. revdia.org.

<sup>20</sup> *Акції Солідарності з Політв'язнями в Києві*. *YouTube*. YouTube, 2019. www.youtube.com.

<sup>21</sup> Rev Dia. *Anarchist and Antifascist Unit Which Rev Dia Participate in*. *Instagram.com*. Rev Dia, February 27, 2022. www.instagram.com.

<sup>22</sup> Rev Dia. "Paris: a Concert in Support of the Ukrainian People." *Революційна Дія*, March 10, 2022. revdia.org.

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