

Destabilization of Russia as a way to freedom in Belarus

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If you ask Belarusian anarchists today what they think about Russian society and the Russian anarchist movement in particular, you are unlikely to hear positive responses. And although the gap between the movements in BUR (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia) existed before 2022 and even before 2014, once the full-scale invasion began, the differences in priorities had a very strong impact on inter-regional relations. I don't want to offend anyone, but the anarchist movement in the Russian Empire today is in a complete shambles.

Yes, BOAK is still active in the country, but its relative small numbers and rather low interest from other parts of the movement in armed struggle show the unwillingness of many radicals to risk their own freedom and security to resist the Russian regime. We can discuss at length the risks of taking to the streets in Moscow or Chelyabinsk against war or mobilization, but these risks make sense when there is some kind of struggle. Instead, the remnants of the Russian movement continue to exist in a safe reality possible only through silent acquiescence to the war in Ukraine or a relatively comfortable life in migration. And if anyone thinks they are resisting the war or Russian imperialism by silently hating the regime, two and a half years and hundreds of thousands killed should at least in theory awaken the need for resistance in the here and now. After all, if anarchists and anti-fascists are not resisting Putin's regime in Russia, what can we say about the ordinary people who have mortgages, children and plans for the future in the form of vacations in occupied Crimea because "it's cheap"™. And if the liberal opposition refuses or is unable to develop radical politics in the country and in the diaspora, shouldn't it at least be done by anarchists? (The watered down imperial communists can be left in the basement, since they can only be taken seriously in society by other "leftist" forces).

But this text is not about how bad things are inside the Russian movement. We can talk about that for a long time (although Russian anarchists themselves are rarely willing to talk openly about problems within Russia or the diaspora). This text is more about what remains for the Belarusian movement in this situation? We can continue to despise the cowardice of Russian society in the face of uncontrolled state violence in the form of imperialism in other countries. We can joke about who is the most Russophobic within the Belarusian or Ukrainian movement, but the reality remains that there will be neither peace nor freedom in Belarus without the collapse of Russia. Exactly the collapse, not the replacement of Putin with a new authoritarian

personality from the opposition, capable of developing alternative strategies for the growth of the empire's influence all over the planet. No matter how successful the Belarusian anarchists or other representatives of the opposition inside Belarus become – without the destruction of the Russian army and the National Guard, we will simply continue to be killed not by Belarusian cops, but by Russian troops.

During the first months of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the strategy of participation in the war against Russia developed inside the anarchist movement with the expectation of destroying the military potential of the Russian empire, weakening Putin's regime and the very collapse of the idea of the Russian world. The participation of anarchists in the struggle against the Russian invasion should not be underestimated. From the liberation of Kherson to the defense of Bakhmut and Avdiivka, anarchists from various regions of the BUR contributed to the destruction of the occupiers. The movement itself paid a huge price for resistance, and those who cry that it was all useless should rather buy a house in the countryside and hope that one day freedom itself will knock on their door and open up a world of opportunities. You don't have to be an anarchist to realize that the path to freedom is impossible without risks, pain and losses.

But the war in Ukraine continues, the likelihood of the collapse of Putin's regime is less than it was in 2022, and 140 million people continue to live in a hut on the edge of the village. In such a situation, we return to questions of strategy for the destruction of the Russian empire. In Ukraine people managed only to contain and perhaps temporarily stop Russia, but it is possible to destroy this monster only from within.

In such a situation the anarchists of Belarus find themselves in a trap in which we are forced to fight against the Russian state in one form or another. And not only Belarusian anarchists, but the whole diaspora. We can continue to organize our events, develop politically and even in some cases militarily, but we will never be able to free ourselves from the Russian empire unless we grow out of our regional struggle into something bigger. Today it is in our own interest to have a strong anti-imperialist movement in Russia and within the Russian diaspora.

With this in mind, we need to adapt our own strategies and go beyond diaspora politics. Through our experience of organizing in exile today, we have to help Russian anarchists and anti-fascists overcome the political ignorance of Moscow or St. Petersburg in favor of a truly internationalist movement. We need to integrate Russians into our own structures, to help them develop and overcome the mistakes of the natives of the empire that are so obvious to us and so painful to them. Allied support and joint political and revolutionary development can not only free us from the Kremlin's oppression, but also bring truly revolutionary transformation to regions throughout the former Soviet empire.

It is worth mentioning here that reactionary forces engaged in "soft" imperialism hardly deserve support. Those for whom not everything is so clear-cut, and the war in Ukraine is not obvious enough for the need to revolt against their own masters. First of all, we are talking about organizations like KRAS-MAT, an example of anarchists who are largely responsible for the weakness and counter-revolutionary nature of the modern movement. Instead of reality, they offer a pleasant fairy tale that poses little risk to the status quo (the mere fact of the existence of KRAS-MAT, whose few members are known to the FSB, speaks louder than any of the organization's statements about militarism and the struggle against the state).

Instead of such forces, we need to strengthen support for BOAK and other revolutionary organizations inside Russia. Financially and organizationally. We need to develop and increase interaction in informational and joint structures for political growth in exile in all regions where dias-

poras from various countries are located, from Georgia to Poland, Germany, France and Lithuania – today, cooperation with progressive Russian activists is critical to our own existence. Yes, it can be extremely difficult for many Belarusian activists, given some of the “peculiarities” of many activists from Russia related to their socialization, but we should put our emotions aside and help our comrades to reflect on their origins. This is how we can find the path to liberation.

But we should not take the need to cooperate with Russian activists as a reason to break with our Ukrainian comrades. The resistance of the peoples of Ukraine against the “Russian world” continues to be one of the most important points of struggle against the state in the region. Any major Russian victories in Ukraine will make liberation from the empire even more difficult. Therefore, cooperation with the Russian movement is impossible without close collaboration and support for anarchists in Ukraine.

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