

Anti-militarism can be different

We feel the urge to talk about the ideological difference between us, anti-militarists, and "anarcho-putinists", who are trying to be part of the international anarchist movement, but refuse to support Ukraine. There is still not enough reflection about sabotage of "anarcho-putinists" and its consequences. This group, which emerged since the full-scale invasion, starts to be visible only today and unfortunately, has some influence on Western anarchist movement.

Adherents of "anarcho-putinism", despite their support of refusal to participate in the war, rarely claim to be pacifists. They usually only say that the real enemy of anarchists is the capitalist class, and that workers' fight against each other is contrary to international solidarity. They usually refer to the experience of World War I, pointing out that **anarchists will never support either side of imperialist war**. They are inspired by such anarchist classics as Malatesta or Netlau, and they claim that Russian war in Ukraine is an imperialist war, and therefore anarchists should remain neutral and not support either side.

But why does "anarcho-putinists" attempt to apply the theoretical constructs of the anarchist classics to the current conflict doesn't make sense? Most probably, because their interpretation of theory doesn't correspond to reality. For example, Errico Malatesta writes in "**Anarchists have forgotten their principles**":

"I am not a "pacifist." I fight, as we all do, for the triumph of peace and of fraternity amongst all human beings; but I know that a desire not to fight can only be fulfilled when neither side wants to, and that so long as men will be found who want to violate the liberties of others, it is incumbent on these others to defend themselves if they do not wish to be eternally beaten; and I also know that to attack is often the best, or the only, effective means of defending oneself. Besides, I think that the oppressed are always in a state of legitimate self-defense, and have always the right to attack the oppressors. I admit, therefore, that there are wars that are necessary, holy wars: and these are wars of liberation, such as are generally "civil wars"—i.e., revolutions."

The supporters of "anarcho-putinism" agree with the above, saying that the oppressed must fight against their oppressors. But they reduce oppression to economic aspect. However, to think that liberation is achieved only through economic expropriation and does not include the struggle for cultural autonomy is a primitive perception of the anarcho-syndicalist approach to self-liberation. Anti-militarist and anarcho-syndicalist Alexei Borovoy claimed that the preservation of cultural identity does not contradict anti-militarism:

"Militarism is a product of imperialism, a peculiar outcome of bourgeois-capitalist culture. And if militarism is inconceivable outside national boundaries, it does not mean that any awareness by people of their uniqueness and self-affirmation of their individual existence, which is the main core of anarchism itself, is always associated with the burdens and immorality of militarism". In other words, like most anarchists, he shared the idea that the participation of the proletariat in the war, not as proletariat, but as people with their own distinctive culture is incompatible with the idea of unification and expansion, i.e. a manifestation of imperialism. Some people can defend their identity without infringing on the identity of others. Such war is, by definition, a liberating war.

And Malatesta, in his another essay, "**The War and the Anarchists**", says:

"We hate war, which is always fratricidal and damaging, and we want a liberating social revolution; we deplore strife between peoples and champion the fight against the ruling classes. But if, by some misfortune, a clash were to erupt between one people and another, we stand with the people that are defending their independence."

In fact, many of the anarchist classical theorists see the national liberation struggle as deserving of anarchist support. Ukrainian anarchist Denis Khromyi wrote an article about it: "**Vadim Damier's Myth of Classical Anarchist Internationalism**", which thoroughly proves that the war of liberation includes not only economic revolution, but also the defense of national identity and regional autonomy, and that the main oppressor of Ukrainian people at this point is not the national bourgeoisie, but the imperialist Russia, claiming for "historical lands".

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