

CRISIS

ANARCHISTS
AGAINST THE
INVASION OF
UKRAINE



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INTRODUCTION

On February 23, immediately after the Russian military invaded Ukraine, photographs reached us of two lone Russian anarchists standing by themselves in downtown Moscow, holding signs. One sign read “No troops to Donbas.” They were swiftly arrested by riot police.

By the next day, thousands of Russians had followed their example, coming into the streets of dozens of Russian cities to protest the war at great risk to themselves. Many of them were arrested. In Moscow, one group of anarchists marched repeatedly with a banner reading “Peace for Ukraine—Freedom for Russia” on the night of February 24. Even after police dispersed the main demonstration, making a large number of arrests, this group of anarchists regrouped and marched again until the police charged and arrested them as well.

The courage that protesters have shown in Russia is humbling. Let no one reduce this to “Russians versus Ukrainians.” We all have cause to stand together against Putin’s warmongering and the imperialism of every state, east or west.

Whether the Russian people as a whole decide to support this invasion at great cost to themselves—or to oppose Putin’s agenda at great risk to themselves—may well determine what happens in Ukraine in the long run. In the meantime, we owe it to the Russians who are risking their freedom to learn how they see this invasion and what it means for their lives in Russia.

“Peace is a privilege reserved for those who can afford not to fight in the wars they create—in the eyes of madmen, we are just figures on a chart, we are just barriers in their path towards world domination.”

—Tragedy, “Eyes of Madness”

AGAINST ANNEXATIONS AND IMPERIAL AGGRESSION

This statement appeared in Russian on avtonom.org, a media project that grew out of the libertarian communist network Autonomous Action.

Yesterday, on February 21, an extraordinary meeting of the Russian Security Council was held. As part of this theatrical act, Putin forced his closest servants to publicly “ask” him to recognize the independence of the so-called “people’s republics” of the Luhansk People’s Republic [LPR] and Donetsk People’s Republic [DPR] in eastern Ukraine.

It is quite obvious that this is a step towards the further annexation of these territories by Russia—no matter how it is formalized (or not formalized) legally. In fact, the Kremlin ceases to consider the LPR and DPR part of Ukraine and finally makes them its protectorate. “First the recognition of independence, then annexation”: this sequence was already worked out in 2014 in Crimea. This is also clear from Naryshkin’s stupid reservations at the meeting of the Security Council (“Yes, I support the entry of these territories into the Russian Federation “).¹

Since the meeting, as it turned out, was broadcast on tape [rather than live], and these “reservations” were not cut out, but left in—the hint is clear.

In an “appeal to the people” that same evening, Putin seemed to “agree” with these requests and announced the recognition of the LPR and DPR as independent states. In fact, he said the following: “We are taking a piece of the Donbass, and if Ukraine rocks the boat, then let it blame itself, we don’t consider it a state at all, so we’ll take even more.” According to Putin’s decree, Russian troops are already entering the territory of the LPR and DPR. This is a clear gesture of threat towards the rest of Ukraine and especially towards the parts of the Lugansk and Donetsk regions still controlled by Ukraine. This is the

1 Sergey Naryshkin, head of Russian foreign intelligence, stumbled in response to a question from Putin, accidentally proposing to absorb the DPR and LPR into Russia when he was not supposed to say that part aloud yet.

no worse than any other. You can download anti-war leaflets for distribution and posting from our website and social networks.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian anarchists are joining in the territorial defense of their cities. It is now harder for them than for people in Russia, but this is one and the same defense. This is the defense of freedom against dictatorship, of will against bondage, of normal people against deranged presidents.

TO YOUR SHEEP

If Putin suddenly comes to his senses by some miracle, and the war ends one of these days, are we ready to “return to our sheep,” as the French say? It is likely that we will be kicked out of the Council of Europe. Thus, Russians will lose the opportunity to apply to the European Court of Human Rights, and soon the Kremlin will restore the death penalty.

For now, we will return to the news in the spirit of all recent years: right now, the State Duma [a legislative body in the ruling assembly of Russia] is adopting a law according to which a military conscript must himself come to the military enlistment office rather than waiting for a summons. Putin also recently raised the salaries of the police. And the prosecutor’s office, in an appeal, demands to increase the term of an anarchist from Kansk, Nikita Uvarov [who was arrested at age 14 for posting fliers around his town], convicted in the famous “Minecraft terrorism case,” from five years to nine years.

You yourself know what to do with all this.

Freedom for the peoples! Death to empires!

ONLY PUTIN NEEDS THIS

The Russian reaction to the war in Ukraine is completely different from what happened here in 2014 [when Russia seized Crimea after the Ukrainian revolution]. Many people, including celebrities who worked for the government, are demanding an immediate end to the war. The removal of Ivan Urgant, the leading Russian TV star, from the air is noteworthy.

The vast majority of those who still support Putin are also against the war. The average Putin supporter just now thinks that everything has been calculated, the war will not drag on for long, the Russian economy will survive. Because yes, it's not easy to live with the understanding that your country is ruled by a deranged person—by Don Quixote with a million-strong army, one of the strongest in the world, Don Quixote with a nuclear weapon capable of destroying all of humanity. It is difficult to realize that, having read second-rate political scientists and philosophers, one can bomb a neighboring fraternal country and destroy one's own economy.

Reveling in unlimited power, Putin has gradually moved away from reality: there are the stories about two-week quarantines for ordinary mortals who need to meet with the Russian president for some reason, and tables of gigantic length at which Putin receives both his ministers and heads of other states.

Putin has always been a politician who balances the interests of security forces and oligarchs. Now the president has stepped out of this role, having gone on an independent voyage through the boundless sea of senility. We are ready to bet a bottle of the best whiskey that in the near future, Mr. President might experience a coup from his own inner circle.

Russia may meet the year 2023 with some other system of power and a different character in the Kremlin. What it will be is unknown. But for now, it is the dusk before dawn.

In the meantime, protests against the war are taking place in Russia. Anarchists participate in them in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Perm, Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg and other cities. In Russia, it is extremely difficult to organize street protests; this is fraught with administrative and criminal terms, not to mention good old-fashioned police violence. But people are coming out all the same. Thousands have already been detained, but the protests continue. Russia is against this war and against Putin! Come out—when and where you see fit. Team up with friends and like-minded people. Social networks are suggesting Sunday at 4 p.m. as the time for a general protest action. This day and hour is

actual occupation [in the sense that until now, Luhansk and Donetsk were only occupied by proxy].

We do not want to stand up for any states. We are anarchists and we are against any borders between nations. But we are against this annexation, because it only establishes new borders, and the decision on this is made solely by the authoritarian leader—Vladimir Putin. **This is an act of imperialist aggression by Russia.** We have no illusions about the Ukrainian state, but it is clear to us that it is not the main aggressor in this story—this is not a confrontation between two equal evils. First of all, this is an attempt by the Russian authoritarian government to solve its internal problems through a “small victorious war and the accumulation of lands” [a reference to Ivan III].

It is quite probable that the Kremlin regime will stage some kind of spectacle of a “referendum” on the annexed lands. Such performances already took place in the DPR and LPR in 2014, but not even Moscow recognized their results. Now, apparently, Putin has decided to change that. Of course, there can be no talk of any “free and secret voting” in these territories—they are under the control of militarized gangs completely dependent on Moscow. Those who were opposed to these gangs and against integration with Russia were either killed or forced to emigrate. Thus, any “referendum on the return of Donbass like a lost ship to its native harbor” will be a propaganda lie. The residents of Donbass will be able to formulate their decision only when the troops of all states—and first of all the Russian Federation—leave these territories.

The recognition and annexation of the DPR and LPR will not bring anything good to the inhabitants of Russia itself.

First, in any case, this will lead to the militarization of all spheres of life, even greater international isolation of Russia, sanctions and a decline in general well-being. Restoring the destroyed infrastructure and taking the “people's republics” into the state budget will not be free, either—both will cost billions of rubles that could otherwise be spent on education and medicine. Have no doubt: the yachts of the Russian oligarchs will not become smaller, but everyone else will begin to live worse.

Second, the likely aggravation of the armed confrontation with Ukraine will mean more dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, more destroyed cities and villages, more blood. Even if this conflict does not escalate into a world war, Putin's imperial fantasies are not worth a single life.

Third, this will mean the further spread of the so-called “Russian world”: a crazy combination of neoliberal oligarchy, rigid centralized power, and

patriarchal imperial propaganda. This consequence is not as obvious as the rise in the price of sausages and the sanctions on smartphones—but in the long run, it is even more dangerous.

We urge you to counter the Kremlin's aggression by any means you see fit. Against the seizure of territories under any pretext, against sending the Russian army to the Donbas, against militarization. And ultimately, against the war. Take to the streets, spread the word, talk to the people around you—you know what to do. Do not be silent. Take action. Even a small screw can jam the gears of a death machine.

Against all borders, against all empires, against all wars!

—Autonomous Action

MOSCOW FOOD NOT BOMBS STATEMENT

A hasty translation of a statement from Food Not Bombs Moscow, which appeared on their Telegram channel on February 24. Three days later, footage circulated widely of riot police brutally arresting the members of this group as they marched with an anti-war banner in Moscow in defiance of the totalitarian ban on demonstrations of more than one person. The Russian police had already been arresting even lone demonstrators, in any case.

We will never take the side of this or that state, our flag is black, we are against borders and freeloader presidents. We are against wars and killings of civilians.

Palaces, yachts, and prison sentences and torture for dissenting Russians are not enough for Putin's imperial gang, they should be given war and the seizure of new territories. And so, "defenders of the fatherland" invade Ukraine, bombing residential areas. Huge sums are being invested in murder weapons while the people are impoverished more and more.

There are those who have nothing to eat and nowhere to live, not because there are not enough resources for everyone, but because they are distributed unfairly: someone has a lot of palaces, while others did not even get a hut.

charges against Ukraine—about corruption, election manipulation, and dishonest courts—would be far more appropriate for the Kremlin to press against itself. Now, Russian troops are, in the full sense of the word, occupiers in a foreign land—no matter how this contradicts the expectations of everyone who grew up on stories about the Great Patriotic War.

Russia has found itself in international isolation. [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan, [General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party] Xi Jinping, and even the Taliban are asking Putin to stop hostilities. Europe and the United States impose new sanctions against Russia every day.

As we prepare this text, the third day of the war is coming. The Russian army has a clear superiority over the Ukrainian one, but the war does not seem to be going exactly according to Putin's plan. Apparently, he counted on victory in one or two days with little or no resistance, but there has been serious fighting throughout the territory of Ukraine.

Russians and the whole world are now watching videos showing shells hitting residential buildings, an armored car running over a senior citizen, corpses and shooting.

Roskomnadzor [the Russian government's Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology, and Mass Media] is still trying to threaten the entire Internet, demanding "Don't call this a war, but a special operation." But few people take them seriously anymore. As long as the Internet in Russia is not turned off completely, there will be enough sources of information. Just in case, once again, we recommend setting up Tor with bridges, VPN, and Psiphon in advance.

The effects of the sanctions and the war are just beginning to be felt by Russians: Most of Moscow's ATMs were out of paper money on Friday. Why? Because the day before, people took 111 billion rubles from banks: in fact, all their savings. The real estate market collapsed, and the construction of residential buildings is the most important branch of the Russian economy. The foreign automotive industry is gradually ceasing to ship cars to Russia. The exchange rates of the dollar and the euro are artificially constrained by the Central Bank. Shares of all Russian companies fell severely. Everyone understands that it will only get worse.

THE DUSK BEFORE DAWN

The following text appeared on February 26, 2022 as a podcast in Russian on the Autonomous Action website.

WAR

On Thursday morning, Putin launched the biggest war in Europe since World War II. He hides behind the alleged interests of the separatist part of Donbas. Although the DPR and LPR were absolutely satisfied with the recognition of their statehood, the official entry of the Russian army and the promised one and a half trillion rubles. Recall that for many months, the cost of rent and food prices in Russia itself have been growing day by day.

The Kremlin has made absurd demands of the Kiev authorities—let's start with “denazification.” It is true that, thanks to their active participation in the Maidan protests of 2014, the Ukrainian ultra-right has secured an outsize position in politics and law enforcement agencies. But in all the elections in Ukraine since 2014, they have won no more than a few percent points of the vote. The President of Ukraine is Jewish. The problem of the Ukrainian ultra-right must be solved, but it cannot be solved with Russian tanks. The Kremlin's other



In order to keep and increase the benefits in their hands, the government declares wars. Who will collect their intestines with their hands, who will have their arms and legs torn off by explosions, whose families will bury their children? Of course, all this does not apply to the ruling minority.

We must resist the militaristic regime and the war it is waging with all our might. Spread information among your comrades, fight as best you can. No war but the class war. Solidarity instead of bombs.

ANARCHIST MILITANT'S POSITION ON RUSSIA'S ATTACK ON UKRAINE

The following statement appeared yesterday on the Telegram channel of Militant Anarchist [Боец Анархист], a collective in Russia whose name we have previously translated as “Anarchist Fighter.”

Our position on the events taking place in Ukraine is clearly evident in our previous posts. However, we felt it necessary to express it explicitly, so that something would not be left unsaid.

We, the collective of Anarchist Fighter, are by no means fans of the Ukrainian



state. We have repeatedly criticized it and supported opposition to it in the past, and we have also been the cause of large-scale repression against the VirtualSim operator, done by the Ukrainian security services in an attempt to fight us.

And we will definitely return to this policy in the future, when the threat of Russian conquest has receded. **All states are concentration camps.**

But what is happening now in Ukraine goes beyond this simple formula, and the principle that every anarchist should fight for the defeat of their country in war.

Because this is not simply a war between two roughly equal powers over the redistribution of capital's spheres of influence, in which one could apply Eskobar's axiom.²

What is happening in Ukraine now is an act of imperialist aggression: an aggression that, if successful, will lead to a decline in freedom everywhere—in Ukraine, in Russia, and possibly in other countries as well. And it will also increase the likelihood that the war will continue and escalate into a global war.

Why this is the case in Ukraine is obvious, as far as we are concerned. But in Russia, a small victorious war (as well as external sanctions) will give the regime what it currently lacks. It will give them carte blanche for any action, due to the patriotic upsurge that will take place among part of the population. And they will be able to blame any economic problems on sanctions and war.

The defeat of Russia, in the current situation, will increase the likelihood of people waking up, the same way that occurred in 1905 [when Russia's military defeat by Japan led to an uprising in Russia], or in 1917 [when Russia's problems in the First World War led to the Russian Revolution]—opening their eyes to what is happening in the country.

As for Ukraine, its victory will also pave the way for the strengthening of grassroots democracy—after all, if it is achieved, it will be only through popular self-organization, mutual assistance, and collective resistance. **These should be the answer to the challenges that war throws at society.**

Furthermore, the structures created for this grassroots self-organization will not go anywhere once the war is over.

Of course, victory will not solve the problems of Ukrainian society—they

2 Eskobar was the vocalist of a Ukrainian rock band called Bredor. Long ago, in an interview, he said a famous phrase, which became a meme: “Шо то хуйня, шо это хуйня”—a succinct way to articulate something to the effect of, “When you are forced to choose between two undesirable options while lacking any alternative whatsoever.”

will have to be solved by taking advantage of the opportunities that will open for the consolidation of society in the instability of the regime that comes after such upheavals. However, defeat will not only fail to solve them—it will exacerbate them many times over.

Though all these are all important reasons for our decision to support Ukraine in this conflict—let's call them geopolitical reasons. But they are not even the primary reasons. The most important reasons are internal moral ones: because the simple truth is that Russia is the aggressor, that it pursues an openly fascist policy. It calls war peace. Russia lies and kills.

Because of its aggressive actions, people are dying and suffering on both sides of the conflict. Yes, even those soldiers who are now being driven into the meat grinder of war (not counting those bastards for whom “war is mother nature,” who, in our opinion, are hardly people at all). And this will continue until it is stopped.

Therefore, we urge everyone who reads this, who is not unfeeling—to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people (not the state!!!) and support their struggle for freedom against Putin's tyranny.

It falls to us to live in historic times. Let's make this page of history not a shameful one, but one we can be proud of.

Freedom to the peoples of the world! Peace to the people of Ukraine! No to Putin's aggression! No to war!
