Russian and Ukrainian Anarchists Speak Out

written by Autonomous Action, Committee of Resistance, Food Not Bombs Moscow | February 24, 2022



A Moscow mural declares, “No war between nations! No peace between classes!”

These translation and interview are reposted from *Crimethinc*. See the full articles: “Russia and Ukraine: Grassroots Resistance to Putin’s Invasion” and “Against Annexations and Imperial Aggression.”

Moscow Food Not Bombs Statement

A hasty translation of a statement from Food Not Bombs Moscow, which appeared on their Telegram channel on February 24th.

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.

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.

Interview: The Committee of Resistance, Kyiv

Crimethinc conducted an audio interview with a spokesperson from "The Committee of Resistance," the newly formed anarchist coordinating group in Ukraine. They will be fielding public inquiries about what anarchists are doing and experiencing in Ukraine here. Crimethinc transcribed the interview as they talked on February 24th.

"The Committee of Resistance" is a coordination center connecting anarchists who are participating in resisting the invasion in a variety of ways. Some are currently on the front; some are engaged in media work about the conditions arising during this resistance, in hopes of clarifying the situation in Ukraine to those who have never been there and explaining to anarchists elsewhere why they believe that resisting Putin is connected with liberation. The project will also be engaging in some support projects in whatever remains of Ukrainian civil society as the invasion proceeds—for example, in Mariupol', some participants brought material support to the center hosting children orphaned by the war—and will assist some comrades in escaping from the conflict zone, though "dozens and dozens" of anarchists and anti-fascists are participating in the resistance.

As of now, the participants are watching to see what mutual aid projects will emerge in Kyiv out of efforts on the part of the population as a whole, and which ones they can participate in most effectively as anarchists.

The person we spoke with is currently located in Kyiv; others have already departed to participate in territorial defense in the regions surrounding Kyiv. In Kyiv, many people are leaving the city, but there has not been aerial bombing since the morning, when the Russian air force attacked military targets around the city and also hit some civilian housing areas in outlying towns, including Brovary, killing dozens of people.

In Kyiv, the atmosphere is tense, but there is no fighting in the city yet, only the aircraft attacks of the morning. Thus far, anarchists have experienced no known casualties, but they are facing serious dangers. It is a hard situation, but so far, the participants' spirits are high.

The majority of the participants in this project were expecting the invasion to begin soon, generally speaking, but they were not expecting it *today,* and were not entirely mentally prepared for it. In fact, they planned and prepared for months, but now they are discovering everything that remained unfinished in their preparations. Still, in the course of hasty meetings, they have pulled together this coordination project.

The spokesperson described their immediate goal: it is not to protect the Ukrainian state, but to protect Ukrainian people and the form of Ukrainian society, which is still pluralistic, even though the Ukrainian state itself is neoliberal and a nationstate with nationalism and all the other terrible things that come with that. "Our idea is that we have to defend the spirit of this society against being smashed by Putin's regime, which threatens the entire existence of the society."

Panning back from that immediate goal, the spokesperson said that they hope to confront Russian military aggression while promoting anarchist perspectives both within Ukrainian society and throughout the world—to show that anarchists are involved in this struggle, that they have taken sides in it—not with the state, but with the people who are impacted by the invasion, with the society of the people who live in Ukraine.

"It is not an exaggeration to say that the whole population is confronting the invasion. Of course, some people are fleeing, but any force that has any investment in the political development of this

place in the future has to be on the side of the people here right now. We want to make some inroads towards being connected with people here on a larger scale, towards getting organized with them. Our long-term task, our dream, is to become a visible political force within this society in order to secure a real opportunity to promote a message of social liberation for people."

In response to the statement that the "whole population is confronting the invasion," we inquired as to whether that included the people in the "republics," the Luhansk People's Republic [LPR] and Donetsk People's Republic [DPR]—the regions in eastern Ukraine that have been occupied by Russian-armed and funded separatist forces since 2014, which Putin just recognized as "independent."

"Honestly," the spokesperson answered, "I have little perspective about the people in the so-called republics; I have only lived here for several years"—having grown up in a neighboring country—"and have never been to the southeast. It's true that there have been some conflicts about language, and local far-right people have exacerbated these conflicts needlessly and severely. For this reason, in the 'republics,' we saw some people waving Russian state flags to welcome the troops, even though this 'independence' will mean the opposite, it will mean being totally subservient to Putin. At the same time, nearby across the trenches, on the other side of the battle lines, we saw thousands of people waving Ukraine's national flags. We don't like this, either, as anarchists, but it does mean that people are ready to fight—that they are ready to defend their independence not only as a state but as a society."

Against Annexations and Imperial Aggression

This February 22nd 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 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 Donbass, 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