

# **AGGRESSORS AND VICTIMS IN A WAR SITUATION**



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Who is the victim and who is the aggressor when war breaks out? Adherents of nationalism – including those on the left – always have a simple but wrong answer. In war, they say, there is always one nation or people who is the aggressor and another nation or people who is the victim. But this answer does not stand up to reality, because the very concept of a nation or a people is a misguided ideological construct.

What is called a ‘nation’ or a ‘people’ is never a homogeneous group, but always involves an artificial alliance of all social classes with their conflicting interests. It is misleading to declare that, for example, the Ukrainian people are the victims in a war, because in reality only part of that ‘people’ is the victim, while another part is the aggressor who clashes with a rival aggressor. A significant part of the so-called ‘Ukrainian people’ is made up of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, local politicians, bureaucrats, policemen, border guards, judges, prison administrators. They all exploit or opp-

ress that part of the ‘Ukrainian people’ which we call the proletariat. The yardstick by which the entire ‘Ukrainian people’ is a defending victim is not only inaccurate in this respect, but literally demagogic.

The anarchist perspective does not support any people or nation, this inter-class alliance of the exploited and their exploiters. What we are really interested in is the (global!) proletariat. And if we look carefully, we see that it is suffering during the war both in Ukraine and in Russia, even if parts of it are inclined to the oppressive policies of “their own” governments. The truth that the nationalists ignore is that the causes of the proletariat’s suffering come primarily from the background of the ruling classes of both countries and the other states engaged in the war.

If we focus on the part of the working class living on Ukrainian territory, we can figuratively say that it is in a position between a hammer (the Russian state and its

ruling class) and an anvil (the Ukrainian state and its ruling class). Concretely, this manifests itself, for example, in the way that when Putin's bombs fall on Ukrainian cities, the Zelensky regime, by closing the borders to men and by forced mobilisation, forces these people to remain under murderous fire. The hammer delivers its blow and the anvil multiplies its destructive effects. In short, the aggression comes not only from the Russian regime, but also from its Ukrainian counterpart.



Leftist nationalists claim that after the “conclusion of a formal peace” and/or the establishment of an occupation regime in Ukraine, the suffering of the civilian population will continue. Anarchists agree. However, they also argue that if the monopoly on the administration of the territory were to be maintained by the Ukrainian state, the suffering of the civilian population would also continue. The war situation has already caused the Ukrainian regime to apply more and more methods similar to those we have long criticised in the Putin regime (criminalisation of the opposition, forced mobilisation, war propaganda, harsh action against desertion, exploitation of workers...). Should we have sympathy for such methods when they are carried out by a regime that formally claims to be a democracy? Or must we rather see this as yet another of the many examples that in reality there is no contradiction between capitalist democracy and dictatorship? Indeed, throughout history it has been shown re-

peatedly that there is only the global dictatorship of capital, which takes on different forms in different parts of the world. And the fact that these forms are never fixed is demonstrated by the reality in Ukraine, where the local state uses pro-democratic rhetoric but applies the same authoritarian tools that it formally criticises in its non-democratic rival, Russia.

Opponents criticize us because we are supposedly blaming the victims. But anarchists do no such thing. In return, however, we can see how leftist adherents of nationalism or “one-sided” anti-imperialism make victims of the aggressors. The Ukrainian bourgeoisie and the Ukrainian civil service are part of the ‘Ukrainian people’, but they are not innocent victims for whom we should stand up. It is an aggressive force which, like the Putin regime, tyrannises the proletariat.

If we interpret the world in nationalist terms like ‘people’ or ‘nation’, we will never see who is the victim and who is the aggressor.

Nationalism is like a smokescreen that prevents us from seeing what is happening right in front of our eyes.

**A COMMENTARY  
ON GRAFFITI  
CREATED  
BY AN “UNKNOWN” ARTIST**



I used to think that everything had limits. But when I saw the graffiti in the attached photo, I thought that the political confusion of the artist was absolutely limitless. Incorporating an anarchist symbol into the name of a state, that takes a great deal of deranged. Perhaps the author does not know that anarchy is the negation of all states, i.e. Russia, Czech Republic, Ukraine, France and all other states. Perhaps it is not important for him that anarchists have always been persecuted, criminalised, imprisoned, and suppressed by all states – totalitarian and democratic. Perhaps the author thinks that if we put an anarchist symbol in the name of a state, the state will cease to be a state and turn into anarchy. If only it were that easy.

Who knows, maybe next time we'll see the same anarchist symbol in the words st**A**te or Česk**Á** Republik**A**. These words also include the letter “**A**“, so the confused graffiti artists have good material for their work.

For those who are not into political confusion, other areas may be more interesting. For example, facts about the nature of the state that bears the name Ukraine.

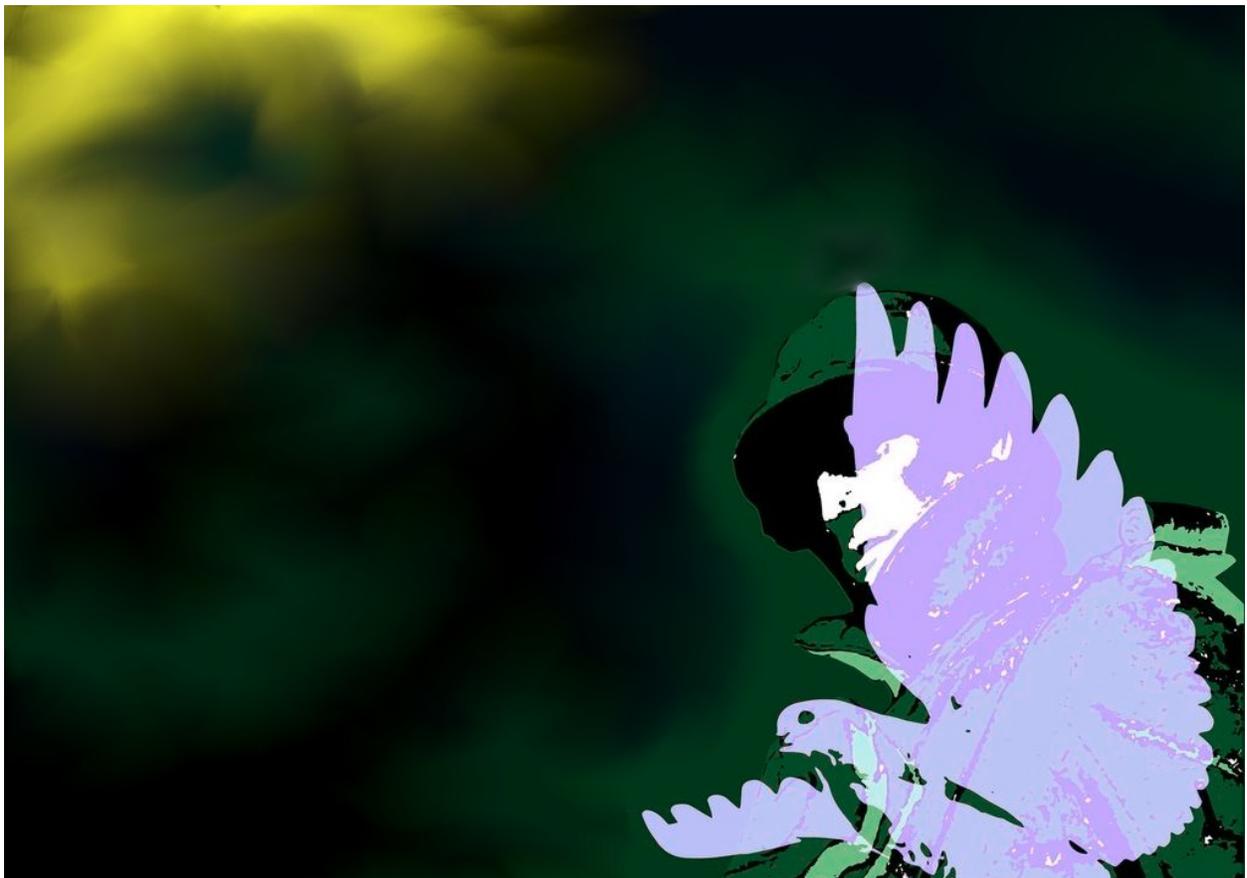
- **Ukraine is a state that has closed its borders to a large part of its male population, effectively trapping these people in a war zone.**
- **Ukraine is a state whose army persecutes men of draft age and forcibly forces them to the front, putting them in danger of serious injury or death.**
- **Ukraine is a state whose border guards persecute, torture and murder deserters.**
- **Ukraine is a state whose courts prosecute deserters and whose prisons imprison them. At the moment, official statistics speak of more than 200,000 deserters, but there are likely to be others who are not officially registered.**

- Ukraine is a state whose courts are currently conducting political trials against anti-militarists on charges of “discrediting the armed forces of the Ukrainian state.”
- Ukraine is a state that criminalises certain political entities on charges of “supporting and promoting communist ideology,” which logically could also affect anarchist groups that refer to class struggle and anarchist communism.
- Ukraine is a state that applies a discriminatory policy towards the Russian-speaking population.
- Ukraine is a state that has incorporated far-right formations such as Azov, the Brotherhood, the Right Sector, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), etc.
- Ukraine is a state that provides protection for the bourgeoisie that grossly exploits the working class. Workers in Ukraine normally receive 20 000

hryvnia (= 460 Euros) for a month's work, while the prices of basic commodities are similar to those in the Czech Republic.

- The Ukrainian state suppresses workers' struggles for better working and living conditions.
- Ukraine is a state that is less brutal than neighbouring states such as Russia or Belarus, but nevertheless its basic essence is the defence of the privileges of the capitalist class at the expense of the working class.
- Ukraine is a state that oppresses, in particular, that section of the working class that, in terms of the state bureaucracy, falls into the category of 'Ukrainian citizens'.
- Ukraine is a state that preserves all the contradictions of class society and therefore all the misery of proletarian life.
- **Ukraine is a state, therefore an enemy of anarchy!**

**SUPPORT FOR DESERTERS  
CREATES A RUPTURE  
IN THE WAR CONSTRUCTION**



In the past, I have decided to sell off a collection of LP/EP and also raise money for war refugees during the free distribution of my publication “*Tato kniha není (z)boží*”. So far I have raised 7 467 Kč (=298 Euros) in this way. I will put all this money into the fundraising for deserters and war refugees organized by the *Anti-Militarist Initiative (AMI)*. The following is my brief explanation of why I am doing this.

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The Russian army deserters prove that not everyone who finds himself on the Russian front is a devoted supporter of Putin and Russian imperialism. Similarly, the deserters from the Ukrainian army remind us that it is not in the interests of the working class to kill and be killed defending the regime in Ukraine and its imperialist friends in the West. Desertion or draft evasion can be a conscious act of political resistance or also just an instinctive instinct for self-preservation. But in

any case, it is always a widening crack in the contours of the war machine. That's why I decided to support these people. Because we will not stop the war by choosing the less brutal state within it and sending its weapons and people to the meat grinder. We stop the war by undermining the ability of all the states involved and their armies to continue the war. And desertion or avoidance of mobilization in Russia and Ukraine is one way that this disruption is concretely manifested.

When workers in military uniform desert, it is always an act of class resistance to the war, whether they realise it or not. In the First World War, the wave of desertions played a significant role in transforming inter-imperialist war rivalries into attempts to revolutionarily overcome capitalism. It is an instructive example of how we can stop the war, but also of what mistakes we must avoid in the future...