

DISPATCHES FROM RUSSIA

REPORTS FROM CITIZEN ILYA



C	4
S	S



start distributing in two places, so we can feed more people. We also plan to pay more attention to the dissemination of information about the movement and its ideas, so that independent groups would appear in other cities. We constantly try to develop ourselves, set goals and achieve them.

HOW PUTIN'S GOVERNMENT DEALS WITH RUSSIAN ANARCHISTS

If you follow the news about Russia, then you probably know what's happening right now with opposition and political activists. Putin's dictatorship focuses on torture and imprisonment of everyone who disagrees with authoritarian anti-social politics. If somebody is struggling against total poverty and unfairness, then they will face repression from government structures such as FSB (the modern incarnation of the KGB), the Centre for Combating Extremism (so-called **Центр «Э»**, most of the torture is organized by them), the police, and contempt from conservative people. The only way to stay in power is terror. Putin is trying to save the state capitalist system, which makes him and his oligarch friends stronger. Anarchists have become one of the main targets of the repression machine, because they seem to be the most dangerous for the state. There are several noteworthy cases that I would like to review.

THE NETWORK

In October 2017, the FSB fabricated a large-scale criminal case against anarchists and anti-fascists, whom they declared members of the terrorist organisation called "The Network." The FSB claims that the detainees planned to arrange explosions during the presidential elections and the World Cup. The defendants claim that they were subjected to torture, during which they were forced to memorize testimony that they were members of the terrorist network "The Network." Some of them got abducted by FSB, like Viktor Filinkov. Viktor is a computer programmer and

anti-fascist, he was arrested on 23 January 2018 at Petersburg Pulkovo airport. FSB beat Filinkov up in a dark-blue minivan, shocked him through his handcuffs, on the back of his head, on his back, and on his groin. After all troubles and torments, there are ten antifascists behind the bars. Those arrested face from five years up to a life sentence in prison. They still experience repressions inside the jail.

“PEOPLE’S SELF-DEFENSE” ANARCHISTS

“People’s Self-Defense” is a socio-political organization whose ideology is libertarian communism, which is a combination of socially oriented anarchism and non-authoritarian marxism.

February 2018, Crimean FSB arrested anarchist Yevgeny Karakashev. He is accused of “inciting hatred” and “justification of terrorism,” or in other words, posting a video on Russian social media page VKontakte. Karakashev is currently under arrest.

November 2018, anarchist and animal rights activist Vyacheslav Lukichev was detained in Kaliningrad. For 36 hours, he was deprived of sleep and food and tortured. The FSB demanded that he confess to administering the “Prometheus” telegram channel and publishing a post in support of Mikhail Zhlobitsky (a 17-year-old anarchist who blew himself up in the Arkhangelsk FSB building). On March 14, Vyacheslav Lukichev was fined 300,000 rubles (\$4,600). He was found guilty of justifying terrorism.

February 2019, in Moscow, the FSB and spetsnaz conducted mass searches and detentions of anarchists. As a result of searches, at least 11 people were detained. Federal TV channels have reported the detention of “anarchist terrorists” from the People’s Self-Defense movement. Among the detainees, Azat Miftakhov, while

Oleg: Mutual aid is important in all conditions, not only in an authoritarian state. Any person is a part of society, and therefore depends on this society and on each member of it. Leaving someone alone with his problems, we thereby contribute to the spread of these problems, and in the end, these problems can fall on each of us. That’s why we pay attention to anybody who needs a helping hand.

6) What’s worse for you: poverty or war?

Andrew: I don’t know what’s worse, because as long as capitalism exists, the poor will be poorer and perish from poverty and hunger. The bourgeoisie of different countries will pit people among themselves to die for the interests of the upper class in wars.

Oleg: Hard to say. The first is often a consequence of the second. Because of the war, many people lose everything, becoming refugees. Because of the war, many become crippled, many lose their friends. The rich get all the benefits of the war, they do not risk life, health, or lose their home, so they calmly control the fate of thousands or even millions of other people. And often, soldiers who return from the war, become useless and poor. So both things are related to each other.

7) If not secret, then what are the plans for the movement?

Andrew: We plan to open a second food distribution point in another area where there are many people in need. There are also ideas for other social and environmental projects, for which, unfortunately, we still do not have enough time and energy.

Oleg: In the near future we plan to start distributing in two places, so we can feed more people. In the near future, we plan to

information, someone joins us and becomes a full member of the group.

4) Tell us about your relationship with vegetarianism and veganism.

Andrew: Most of the group consists of vegans and vegetarians, some of the participants are omnivores, but on events, we carry only vegan food.

Oleg: First you need to explain that vegetarianism and veganism are two different things. Vegetarians don't eat meat, mainly because they don't want to eat the flesh of dead animals. Vegans don't eat meat, and in general all products of animal origin (milk, eggs, cheese, etc.), as they refuse any exploitation of animals. One of the principles of the movement is the principle of non-violence, that is, the rejection of any kind of manifestation of violence by humans. Wars are an example of the violence of some people over others. Any kind of exploitation is violence, poverty is the result of the exploitation of ordinary people by the rich. The exploitation of animals is also a manifestation of human violence. That's why we don't use animal products. However, the participants in the movement are not obliged to be vegans, since compulsion to refuse animal products is also not permissible, nevertheless, it is everyone's personal choice to eat animal products or to exclude them completely from their diet. There are vegans and omnivores in our group, but we don't conflict about it inside the group.

5) How important is mutual aid in an authoritarian state?

Andrew: Solidarity and mutual aid — these are the things that society can counter the pressure from the state.

being tortured by the FSB, was instructed to confess to the manufacture of explosives. Azat was beaten and tortured with an electric screwdriver, but he refuses to testify against himself. Another detainee, Daniel Galkin, was tortured by a taser. He was told to testify against Miftahov, agree to cooperate with the special services, and also to give a compromising anarchist interview to Channel One (Первый Канал). By evening, all the detainees were released, except for Azat Miftakhov. Azat was abducted inside a police station right in front of his lawyer. For almost two days, no one could find Miftakhov. Investigators refused to provide information on his whereabouts to lawyers. Finally, on the evening of February 2, he was found in a detention facility in the city of Balashikha.

Being an anarchist, I personally fear that the political police may kidnap me at any time, start torturing me soullessly, and the real criminals and terrorists will never answer for this. What we have today in Russia is a reflection of the Franco regime in Spain in an even worse form. The FSB will always gloat on anarchists, using them to sow fear and horror among the people. Putin's regime has always rested on a society of spectacle and repressions against the opposition, but people's hate is getting stronger and stronger. Anarchists around the world should enhance solidarity with Russian activists, and only mutual-aid strengthens people. The next wave of torture and batons will be worse, it can happen any day.

WHY WE SHOULD FEAR KLEPTOCRACY AND MONOPOLISM

It's been 32 years since capitalism came to Russia. Starting with Gorbachev's reforms, which legalized entrepreneurship on the 5th of February 1987, capitalism reigns wild in Putin's Russia. Bureaucracy has evolved into wild capitalism and a lot of party members have become democrats and criminals. In modern Russia, everything that must belong to the people in common is owned by the omnipotent government, in which power is held by a large group of friends from the 90s. In this article, I would like to reveal how this kleptocratic capitalism developed in Russia and how dangerous it is.

A HUGE ISSUE OF WILD CAPITALISM

When criminals ate up all of the markets in Russia, it became impossible to do legal activities. But when apex predators can't find prey anymore — survival of the fittest starts.

Putinism has legalized many illegal activities but, in doing so, gave power to a small number of Putin's friends. Viktor Zolotov, who was the personal bodyguard of Boris Yeltsin and Putin, now owns Rosgvardia — the militarized organization which terrorizes kids and women at demonstrations. This and similar moves have concentrated economic and political power into a few hands and created a hidden form of monopoly.

The worst fact about this monopolism is that the basis of the Russian economy is the extraction of rent in the broad sense.

events.

2) *What kind of people usually come to you?*

Andrew: Most of those whom we feed are old people who don't have enough to live on with their low pension, and also passers-by and schoolchildren, who are interested in the action, are eating here.

Oleg: Different people come to us: homeless people, senior citizens, since we are standing next to the metro station on one side and the market on the other, metro workers and people coming from the market, as well as ordinary passers-by, also come to us. Many come up for food, but some just chat, find out who we are, share their ideas or problems.

Most support our ideas and some even offer help. But sometimes people come up to us who have a negative attitude to our initiative, believing that “the rescue of a drowning man is the drowning man's own job”. From such people, you can often hear: “Why you feed them?”, “If they want to eat, let them go to work”, “If war would happen, then who will protect you?” We try to explain that there are no other people's problems, we try to explain the true causes and goals of all wars, and how important it is to show solidarity and support each other.

3) *How much do Samara residents support you?*

Andrew: Sometimes people contact us because we always give flyers to people, most of them do it by social networks and give away groceries, or simply transfer money to us.

Oleg: As I mentioned, most of those who come to us support our ideas and many offer help. Our movement is of great interest among young people, someone helps in the dissemination of

these were mainly visits to the animal shelter and assistance to them. In August 2018, the idea came up to learn the experience of activists from Moscow and St. Petersburg, who also handed out food to those in need. At the end of October, we reached our first action and for almost a year now we have been existing, depending mainly on our own resources and capabilities, gaining strength in numbers of people.

Oleg: The movement originated in the 80s of the last century and has since spread throughout the world, including Russia. Our city was no exception. Even 10 to 15 years ago, similar actions were organized in Samara. We just decided to revive them.

The main goal of the movement is to draw public attention to the destructive policies of the governments of most countries, in which huge sums of money are spent on military, while the number of poor and homeless is growing every year due to wars that are started and sponsored by the authorities.

At some point, many of us decided that we needed to do something useful, instead of making senseless speeches about how bad is everything around and how everything needs to be changed. Since each of us heard about the Food Not Bombs, we decided to take up such actions because we thought that we could do it and we're right. The only problem was that we had no experience in doing such events and there was nothing to gain from someone. But despite this, we hit the ground running and since the fall of last year we have been steadily going out to hand out food. At first, we had to learn from our mistakes and after each action, we made conclusions about what needs to be changed or added. Now we have a lot of experience in this, which we are pleased to share with others who wish to organize similar

Someone concentrates natural resources, someone a budget, someone import-export, someone something else. And it belongs to 1% of the whole country while over 30 million people live for less than \$150 per month. Saying that the Russian experience is simply the “wrong capitalism” means that you laugh at the millions of poor citizens kept down by the effects of capitalism. A lot of them are retirees and most likely were good engineers, social workers, scientists, or blue-collar workers with a lot of experience. The criminal state doesn't care about society because they are more anti-social than depressed alcoholics and drug addicts. This too has become a common attribute of Putin's dictatorship. Vodka companies and drug mafias are the closest friends of the corrupted state — all of them are offenders.

The absence of any significant resistance by the elites to Putin suggests that the elites perceive the Putin regime as a logical continuation of the Yeltsin regime. Those people from the 90s supported the ideas of free market and privatization and now they love patriotism and state corporations. The main purpose of their life — to put more into their pocket — has remained the same. The party will say — we will be for democracy, the party will say — we will stand up from our knees.

Russian society is now atomized. Wild capitalism created a hopeless society where everyone lives egoistically. Only people with great optimism try to self-organize and help each other. Egoism is what the rich feed to us. Russian people have always been altruistic but wild capitalism has cut off our oxygen. The rich corrupted our mindset. Mutual aid and collectivism became taboo and today's lifestyle of the middle class (which is dying out) and upper class perfectly represents this.

Loneliness and depression have become the two main aspects of modern life. Capitalism was only made to entertain 1% of the whole population by the exploitation of the other 99%. Sometimes we can't see it, but the Russian experience tells it perfectly. Some of them from the upper class openly laugh at people and call them "cattle." They've created a situation where free speech exists for them, but it's punishable to question or insult officials. Even touching a Rosgvardia officer can cost 6 years in jail.

What I'm telling is only the part of the truth. I got in trouble with the police a lot of times and I've seen intense poverty around the streets. Kleptocracy means that your future will be stolen in the favor of gods and masters. Monopolism means that they declare their force over you. Wild capitalism means that social elevators will never open up to you and the people you love.

Here, fear is stronger than love. That's why we should fear kleptocracy and monopolism: to remember that you will always be weak without unity in this world. Always remember this love when you feel weak.

AN INTERVIEW WITH YOUNG RUSSIAN ACTIVISTS FROM FOOD NOT BOMBS

Food Not Bombs is an independent international movement whose activists are doing direct action by handing out vegan food to everyone. They believe that their activities help to struggle against poverty, militarism, and violence. Absolutely all existing groups in Russia are decentralized, but they all support the same idea. While the Russian government spends billions on defense, at least 20 million people live below the poverty threshold. Their lives are changing because of these young antifa activists from Russia. We've contacted some of these activists from Samara to ask them a couple of questions:

1) Tell us how the movement appeared in Samara and what views it pursues.

Andrew: The movement in Samara began in the 2000s, when activists had to fight back from neo-Nazi attacks, holding the lid of the pan in one hand and the knife in the other.

Now the time has changed and the streets have become more peaceful, thanks to those who used to fight back those villains. The generation of anti-fascists has changed.

We began to organize these actions in order to set an example of how to do good deeds without the help of the state. Many of us support the idea of libertarian communism, or are simply not indifferent to other people's troubles.

We started volunteering somewhere in the beginning of 2016 —