

INTERNATIONAL ANARCHIST NEWS SEGMENTS



THE FINAL STRAW RADIO - DECEMBER 10, 2022

An interview from the November 2022 episode by Frequenz-A with Lölja Nordic a leftist anarchist from the Feminist Anti-War Resistance from St. Petersburg, Russia, speaking about the international, feminist, anti-war movement against the Russian war in Ukraine. You can find that telegram channel at t.me/femagainstwar in Russian.

We share an interview by A-Radio Berlin from October with ABC Belarus on the infotour they were conducting at the time.

Finally, back to Frequenz-A with someone about the squat opened this fall in Slovenia known as PLAC, the acronym meaning square and standing for Ljubljana Participatory Autonomous Zone.

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FEMINIST ANTI-WAR RESISTANCE FROM ST. PETERSBURG

Frequenz-A: We talk today with somebody from Feminist Anti-War Resistance from Russia. Maybe you can introduce yourself as you like, which pronouns you use and whatever else can be important for the topic.

Lölja Nordic: Thank you so much for having me. My name is Lölja Nordic. I'm a co-coordinator of the Feminist Anti-War Resistance movement. I'm from St. Petersburg, Russia. At the same time, I'm an anarchist, leftist anarchist, I would say, and I'm a contemporary artist as well.

Frequenz-A: For those who never heard that feminist anti-war resistance in Russia exists, can you tell us who are you? How long you've existed? What are you doing? What's your aim?

Lölja Nordic: So we started our movement on the second day when the war escalated in Ukraine. And it was important for us to connect and unite different feminist grassroots movements all over Russia, and maybe even internationally. So now we are working as an international network of feminists and not only feminists, but leftists and queer groups who are opposing this war, who are fighting against this war in Ukraine. Our idea started when we realized that, as feminist activists and as people who have a lot of experience in terms of grassroots organization and grassroots networking, we already felt that we have the power of uniting people together and building systems of mutual aid. So, we thought that it would be a really important tool to start mobilizing people to oppose this war and to confront this war and that's what we did.

And right now, it's been already six or seven months that we're working. We build a really large-scale system of different people with different skills. For example, some people are helping Ukrainian refugees. Other people are helping political prisoners and political activists inside Russia. Other people are creating independent media and spreading real news about what's happening in Ukraine among people in Russia because there is a lack of information for a lot of people. After all, there is a propaganda issue in Russia, and Russian authorities try to block all independent media. For us, it's important to create independent ways of spreading information so people could see it. For exam-

ple, we are using partisan strategies, such as DIY newspapers, and self-printed newspapers, which our activists inside Russia are spreading all over the place, in their buildings, or at their student campuses. So it's different large-scale work. And it's all built on the grassroots level, with the people who have this activist experience. And some don't have it, but they're learning with the help of others.

Frequenz-A: On Wikipedia, you can read a part of your manifesto. It was written that you unite some 45 different feminist organizations. Did it get bigger, is there an actual number [that you can share]?

Lölja Nordic: Yeah, I think it got bigger by now. It's difficult to say the real numbers because some people are still doing their work and organizing groups anonymously. For example, we have feminist anti-war resistance groups inside of Russia, but we can't share information about them because it's a danger to their life and their safety. And when we are counting ourselves, the groups who belong to this large moment, we're counting not only the cells outside of Russia, we're counting them inside of Russia. Approximately, I can say that it's right now around 100 different groups, different sizes, and different amounts of people, but still, it's growing. And we have our way to connect with people through anonymous telegram bots. People who are interested in creating a new cell, or a new group, contact us regularly. So we can see that the interest in making new groups is increasing.

Frequenz-A: Maybe you can tell us how your activity changed somehow after the 21st of September when the "partial" mobilization was announced? Do you make now something new? And do you feel that it has influenced society so that there is a maybe a way to stop this war?

Lölja Nordic: It was another trigger for people who are not identifying as political. I think this mobilization thing woke up a lot of people who were not that active before because mobilization affects everyone in Russia. So I think it was a good start to bring into the activist work, the anti-war work more people. We just figured out that we have to work with this issue and that we have another direction of our work in terms of mobilizations because a lot of people don't know their rights and they're panicking. They don't know the laws, they don't know how they can escape mobilization, how they can avoid mobilization without their consent. On the one hand, it is hard for people to understand what's going on because they're not used to digging into this information. And on the other hand, we have the authorities who keep threatening people and spreading misinformation to confuse people to get them mobilized. So our work as activists is to provide high-quality information about what is right, what is wrong, what the myth around the mobilization is, and what the real

issue is. We've been doing this educational work.

A very bad issue is that authorities and the police started using mobilization as a new way of threatening activists, because when they first announced the full-scale mobilization. We had street protests all over Russia. On the first night of the protests, we faced situations when authorities and the police tried to conscript the detainees. So imagine a person getting arrested at the street protests. And in a couple of hours, an official representative of the army comes to this police station and tries to give these mobilization papers to this particular activist who was arrested. So they started using it as another threat. That's when we realized that we also need to make our work of helping Russian activists to flee the country more serious because we had a situation where we had to rescue people who were at high risk of getting mobilized. After all, they were arrested at the street protests. So right now we're doing it with other activists from other groups and trying to relocate people temporarily, so they won't be brought to the war zone because of their activism.

Frequenz-A: I'm reading a lot about the situation in Russia and what's going on with people after the arrest, and also the lot of torture which is going on there? And that often brings me to the question of where the limits are, what is possible, which kinds of protests? And at the same time, a double question is you're called anti-war resistance. Does anti-war mean non-violence – even though it is unclear what non-violence is – but there's lots of information about how military commissariats are burning, and some people destroy the railways. How do you position yourself? What are the edges of what are the anti-war protests in Russia?

Lölja Nordic: Yeah, I personally can say that I don't consider these partisan strategies of protests, such as burning the military offices or breaking the railways as a violent kind of protest. We can make it clear by saying that those partisans in Russia and Belarus who are breaking the railways and burning up the military offices in Russia, are mostly anarchist activists, and those partisans are very clear about how to do this and how to do this right with no human victims in the process. So when they're burning up the military offices, they're doing it during the weekend, in the night, we're when there's nobody inside the building, so no person will get hurt. When they're breaking the railways – there's been already hundreds of cases during the last six months – and as far as I know, there were no victims because they're breaking the railway before these exact trains that bring military machines to the war zone are coming. So these are not trains with passengers. These are the technical trains, so nobody got hurt.

In Feminist Anti-War Resistance, we support and we are standing in solidarity with the partisan movement. And I think that some of the partisans can also consider themselves as a part of the Feminist Anti-War Resis-

tance movement, because of course, there are people of different genders who are doing this partisan sabotage work. Also, I think it is important to say that, speaking about nonviolent protest, it is difficult to say what is violence, because sometimes it's self-defense. I don't think that when you're getting beaten by the cop or when you're being surrounded by the armed police on the streets, and when you're trying to protect yourself, people who are trying to fight back often get arrested, and they get serious criminal cases against them. But I don't see opposing the cops on the streets as a violent protest, because I think this is self-defense. Because most of the people who are protesting on the streets are people who have no guns, they have nothing, they're just standing there with their bare hands. And they have to protect themselves from the police who are fully armed. And there are hundreds and thousands of them.

Frequenz-A: How can people join you?

Lölja Nordic: Good question. We have our Telegram channel and Linktr.ee account, we don't have a website, we have a Facebook page. The Facebook page is run in English. So it's our main international channel of communication with other people because Telegram and Instagram are mostly in Russian. So if you want to join us, you can just type on Facebook Feminist Anti-War Resistance movement, and find our Linktr.ee and our manifesto and how to join a group of Feminist Anti-War Resistance in your city, or how to support already existing groups and share some of our materials and articles.

For me, it's also important to say that, we don't represent our groups in different countries outside of Russia, as some groups unite only with Russian anti-war activists. Our main goal is to interact with local activists in different countries and in different cities, mostly with feminists and anti-war activists to be able to think together about how we can oppose this war and how we can share our experiences, how we can build a stronger anti-war network where people share their beliefs in terms of gender equality and are against discrimination of all kinds. We also are having a big focus on decolonial issues. We're supporting people of different ethnicities and indigenous people in Russia who are also getting twice as much oppressed when there are anti-war activists and when there are representatives of indigenous groups. So for us, it's really important to find allies in different cities, in different countries because we think that only together, united internationally, we can do something to stop this war.

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS BELARUS

A-Radio Berlin: Anarchist Black Cross Belarus is right now doing an info tour through Europe. And our comrades also happened to give a talk in Berlin on 6th of October 2022. We quickly caught up with them after the talk about the situation that they're facing and the current state of events and also tried to summarize some great parts of the discussion that happened after the talk. Some tips and tricks that the comrade who did the talk gave on how to win the next possible uprising that we find ourselves to be part of and turn it into a successful revolution.

Hello, Boris. So nice that you're talking to us. Would you mind introducing yourself for a short moment?

Boris: Right. So as you said, I'm Boris and I'm from ABC-Belarus, I've been active in the group for quite some time. We're doing solidarity work with arrested anarchists and anti-fascists in Belarus and people who are under different types of repression by the Belarusian regime.

A-Radio Berlin: We were following with great interest the uprisings in 2020. Now it's 2022. What's new, what's the situation like right now?

B: Well, to make it short, the situation is shit. To make it a little bit longer, things are developing quite rapidly in the negative direction. There was some hope in 2020 and then 2021, that at some point, repressions will stop and we would get rolled back on how severe the Belarusian regime is or was. But this didn't happen. Even two years later, there are still people arrested for participating in protests in 2020, and there are still people [being] tortured. And on top of that, the war in Ukraine pushed Lukashenka even further in the direction of Russia. And he currently completely lost political independence, Russians can go in and go out without any questions and this is also bringing the possibility of changes. So for us, it is now even more clear, although it was clear even in 2020, that without the fall of the Russian regime, it is hard to imagine the new political changes or political systems in Belarus or in other countries that are right now under a severe choke of Moscow.

This is another part that is affecting the situation a lot. Of course, the war is happening and the Belarusian regime is harshly responding to the people who are trying to protest or resist it in any way. People are also getting arrested for that, not like in Russia, where you have articles for defamation of the Russian army. In Belarus, you don't have that. But you do have a lot of political articles and a lot of extremist articles that can be used to prosecute those who are opposing the war. And although Lukashenka is not really directly participating in the war, as it is, he is still putting a lot of effort into making this war successful, first of all, for Putin and for the victory of Russia. This includes also repressions against the Belarusian activists who are still in the country. A lot of people have heard about the railroad wars that were happening in Belarus at the beginning of the war, people who are sabotaging the railroad infrastructure to prevent the fast movement of the Russian forces. Those people are very harshly targeted. Some of them, for example, during detention, were shot in their legs. And there is a new article that was introduced that would allow the death penalty for those who are trying to commit terrorist actions. So, there is also a fear that those people will be prosecuted for those things as well.

A-Radio Berlin: So, dear listeners, everyone, keep donating tons of money to ABC-Belarus and keep writing tons of postcards, or even letters to imprisoned comrades and other imprisoned fellow workers in Belarus.

I have my second question, which happens to be the last one also. Comrades from Belarus said that they didn't really expect the big uprisings in 2020 to happen. I was wondering, now that you have hindsight on the Belarusian uprising from 2022, if similar things, even with having different contexts, you're obviously would be to happen, for example, this fall in Germany. I don't know how, but people might just decide "We don't want the regime, we don't want capitalism." What lessons did you learn? What should we be doing as anarchists in unexpected times of widespread uprisings in the society where we happen to live in?

B: I think what's important is to be ready for everything to a certain extent, in the sense that those uprisings are not happening as a pure anarchist revolution, or socialist revolution, or whatever, even the fucking right-wing revolution. Although social movements are really booming, there was quite a mixture of political ideas and political thoughts. And quite often, the ideas that for some people took years to absorb, during those moments of uprisings, during those moments of social movements are getting taken up by huge parts of society very fast. People are interested in solutions. And to address that we actually have to be on the streets, to be with the people, and be also aggressive in our political ideas, not being afraid of us being anarchists, not being afraid of our political ideas and goals and dreams and actually present them to the people because I know that quite often, anti-fascists and anarchists and any progres-

sive activists are afraid to scare away the people with their political ideas. You shouldn't be. Actually, a lot of people are very receptive to anti-authoritarian ideas, they're actually striving for an equal and free society. It is quite rare to find people in social movements who would be like "Yes, I am for a fascist regime, I actually want to go to the concentration camp, and I want to fucking die in the authoritarian regime." People do want freedoms, and it is up to different political movements to define those freedoms.

So we, as anarchists, should present our version of freedom, how we see it, and what people can actually get from those social movements, from those social uprisings. And of course, this can happen anywhere, you never know. And the point here is not, again, to sit on your chair and wait for the perfect situation, but rather work with what you got, and be insistent and be brave and fucking active.

A-Radio Berlin: Another comrade involved in the uprising gave the following advice, in addition to that. We want to share it with you. Once revolution happens, be flexible, whatever you decided on collectively today, might not be the things that are actually working and/or needed tomorrow. So be able to find a solution on the spot for the situation that you actually encounter. Then print loads of leaflets, cause people are super interested in the moment of huge demonstrations to get some material that they can engage with. Share contacts, networks, whatever you have, if you happen to know a cool print shop that will help you print all the revolutionary propaganda, then print as much as you can and help other people who are doing revolutionary work to also do that.

Collect and spread as much infrastructure also, apart from context and networks, as you can, be it your sound system, be it loads of loudspeakers. Our friend and comrade mentioned that most people in Belarus were at a protest for the first time, they didn't have a loudspeaker at home, but they were super grateful if someone was able to provide that, actually, for them and for everyone.

Another tip that we got was to learn how to talk to people. When you're amidst a lot of protesters, learn how to approach people with what you think might be good tactics in a situation, or which might be a good strategy, advice on how to protect yourself from persecution and repression. Learn how to talk to people on the streets, but also, at the neighborhood assemblies, at the gatherings you happen to be part of, learn how to talk about the revolution, the uprising from an anarchist's perspective, and learn to speak up.

Then, another tip that we got – keep doing what you're good at. Don't try to do stuff that you never did before. That was not part of your spectrum of action before the uprising because it might be that you happen to be not good at it. You might fail when trying the first time to arm yourself, but maybe other people who already have experience with that stuff are better at it, and can maybe teach you how to do it. Try to work with what you got. And be

realistic with your resources and be content about what you can achieve with them. Keep doing what you're good at.

But also, on the other hand, grab the moment of the uprising. Don't follow too harshly on routines that you have that take a lot of time and space, but also see what possibilities the moment gives you and try to free resources from your everyday life to put in the revolutionary moment and the movement.

The last piece of advice that our friend gave us is, since we have, for example, already some experience with being in demonstrations as an organized group, we might know how to move, how to make collective decision-making, how to act as a group of people, and that something that maybe the other 500,000 people that are on the streets next to you don't. So just try and find a way of showing on the frontline how it should be an organized group of people moving through the protests. Thanks so much again for sharing these. We are happy to spread this knowledge. Anything you would to add?

B: Yeah, as you were saying, don't forget to donate. Don't forget to donate to ABC-Belarus, for our work is not financed by NGOs or states or the CIA, although some people tend to say that we are CIA-sponsored, which never made any sense. We are working solely on donations and we need those donations to actually cover the costs of lawyers, to cover the costs of food parcels. And we are here right now in debt. And we do not have a plan for how to cover those debts apart from just working even more, and getting even more stress about paying off those debts unless people are donating and supporting what we are doing, and actually making solidarity happen, because that's what it takes right now. A lot of money, a lot of people who require that money, and those people actually feel the international solidarity, when the lawyers are coming, when the postcards are coming when the food parcels are coming. And even not only the people who are sitting in prisons, but their families, their friends, their relatives, and all those who are outside of Belarus right now, all of them who actually receive that solidarity, feel that they are not alone. And I think that's one of the most important parts of solidarity that people should never be left on their own in those hard moments.

A-Radio Berlin: And please share your website with us. Twice, will be best.

B: It's ABC-belarus.org. You can also find it in search engines and on social media. And if you make a little effort, you will find the Anarchist Black Cross Belarus. It's not complicated.

A-Radio Berlin: It's everywhere. So thank you so much for your great work. And good luck to all of us, I guess.

B: Yeah, thank you as well.

LJUBLJANA PARTICIPATORY AUTONOMOUS ZONE

Frequenz-A: Thank you so much for finding time to talk with us. Please introduce yourself and tell us a bit about the new squat. We know nothing and don't know where to start.

Jan: Okay, sure thing. My name is Jan. I am a member of the coordination and PR team at the new squat that is opened two Saturdays ago on 3rd September in Ljubljana. You can refer to me as comrade Jan. In terms of the squat, it is called PLAC, it's an acronym for Ljubljana Participatory Autonomous Zone. Of course, the acronym doesn't work in English the same way as it does in Slovenian. But I think you get the idea. Now, the way that we decided to structure our presence in the media is to present this as an autonomous zone that serves as a critical response to the ever-increasing gentrification in Ljubljana, but also in Slovenia as a whole, and the mass shortage of places where young people can autonomously work to achieve their dreams of self-reliance and cultural process. It mostly serves as a place where you are free of self-censorship and free of the ever-commercialized market. It's an open place for anybody to fulfill their dreams.

Frequenz-A: Is it also linked to the eviction of ROG or even in response to the things the City Council is now doing with the former building of ROG? Are they making a kind of social center run by the state or the city in a really restricted way?

J: Well, our connection to ROG is just that a lot of people that used to participate in the autonomous factory of ROG are also participating now in PLAC but they constitute a minority of people. It's a completely new generation of squatters and people participating in such things. However, we do have a respectful attitude towards the legacy of ROG but we really try to avoid seeing ourselves as ROG 2.0. So far, in regards to how the city authority treated the former factory, we have a bit of an advantage since the place that we are squatting is not in possession of the Ljubljana authority, but rather it is in possession of the so-called Public Tender for Collection of Binding Bids which is this government-owned public caretaker that seizes abandoned property and then sells it off to the highest bidder for their own since their sustainability. Thus, we

don't have to interact with the city authority which has been extremely hostile to any autonomous zones or squats both in the past and also in the future. Instead, we have to lead talks with this Public Tender for the Collection of Binding Bids, which is a bit more favorable, fingers crossed.

Frequenz-A: You have already described the idea of the squat, but maybe you can describe what it is, how big it is, whether is it in the outskirts or it's in the center of Ljubljana?

J: The place itself is a former restaurant/pub that was used by a trade union of road workers that no longer exists. And then afterward, it was just a pub that was used by the general community in the vicinity. Then it was abandoned for 10 years. Now we are using it. It is roughly 80 square meters of space plus a very large basement area with a lot of different rooms that will be repurposed for art ateliers [studios] or an MMA gym. It's not exactly in the center, it's a good 15 to 20-minute walk from the center. And it's located on what is generally conceived of as a relatively big street. However, it's off to the side next to an industrial zone, and surrounded by a high-density residential area. However, the building itself is also surrounded by a lot of trees. Sort of a jungle, but this is just a consequence of years of neglect. A good consequence of this is that any sound that we emit from the place itself is muffled by all this foliage. To answer your question, we are not really in the city center. We're not in the outskirts, we're just in between area, in a high-density post-socialist residential area.

Frequenz-A: Do you plan to have residents or will you only use it as a social center?

J: Well, people are already living inside it. Every day, we have a collective breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There's at any point at least 5 to 10 people are sleeping in the place, however, we are trying to increase this number, because it is vital to prevent sudden eviction or police raids or raids of security workers that the Public Tender for Collection of Binding Bids has hired to protect the actual building. So, people are living there, but the primary purpose is for it to serve as a social center.

Frequenz-A: Maybe you can also tell a little bit about activities you carried out there so far since you squatted it some weeks ago.

J: Yeah, of course. We have conducted a lot of picnics. We've conducted picnics both for people who are passing by, people who occupied the place, and also for the surrounding community because we generally want to keep good ties to the community and avoid any violent confrontation or disturbance of public peace or whatever. But other than that, we have also organized several concerts,

from various folk singers to a partisan singing choir, which is a local Slovenian phenomenon. One of them came and gave a concert. We've also organized performances by a circus group that used to work in ROG and Metelkova, as well as various learning basic dexterity and practical things like knitting, welding, and things like this. And also English tutoring for children that cannot afford very expensive tutors.

Frequenz-A: Sounds really cool. As the connection with the neighborhood is a really crucial thing if you are squatting, how is that connection so far?

J: The general response from the surrounding community so far has been very positive. We've had a lot of people come over and donate old mattresses and furniture and food. It's been pretty good. It's been good very peaceful.

Frequenz-A: How is it to squat in Ljubljana? What [problems] could you face? What are the eviction risks and what are practices you can do to fight the state's reaction?

J: I would say that it's too early to say that the squatting situation in Ljubljana has improved. We had a general election this year and the ruling coalition parties were once invited to answer some questions by a group of a hundred NGOs. And one of the questions was "Do you support squats and autonomous places like Metelkova, like ROG? And would you support an expansion of such places?" All of the ruling coalition parties said that they are in favor and that they support this activity. But so far, only one of these parties has very openly voiced its support.

The prime minister of Slovenia, actually, funnily enough, texted us from his personal account on Instagram and said something along the lines like "I'm following you, I support you as a person but I know that it is only a matter of time before the property owner will enforce his right to claim his territory or whatever, yada yada." He used emojis. So he was very down-to-earth with us about that *chuckles*. Just generally in Ljubljana, the main risk of eviction is the mayor himself that has been in position for, I believe, over 10 years now and he's running for another term. He has been extremely hostile to such initiatives, he has very often threatened to put an end to Metelkova. He was the one that fabricated an eviction notice for ROG where he claimed famously that nobody was occupying the building at the time of eviction. He is viewed as this force of perpetual gentrification of the city, and he definitely does not support us one bit.

But broader public support seems to be in our favor, of course, with notable exceptions, but, as I said earlier, the surrounding community is supportive. The general public attitude is that these are some young people who have nowhere else to go so they created a place for themselves to create and to

live outside of the limits of modern bureaucracy and commercialized living and creation.

Frequenz-A: Okay, thank you so much. We need to come to the end of the interview. But maybe you can tell us how the people can get in touch with you and those who want to network, do some mutual aid come for a visit?

J: Yes, of course. I suggest that you follow our social media accounts. You can find us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Our name is avtonomni_plac. We post our activities, our program, and our location is also posted in the bio, if anybody chooses to visit.

But in terms of help, any donations of old cloth, mattresses or furniture or light bulbs, cables, electronics, whatever, are very welcome. But more than anything, food is necessary for the upkeep of the kitchen and for daily breakfasts, dinners, and lunches. If anybody chooses to visit and lend a hand with cleaning and organizing, they are very, very much welcome. Anything else that you can do is share and get the word out. Because so far, the response has been so positive that we are banking on the fact that public opinion is this positive of us reduces the risk of eviction by a lot, and it is crucial for the continued survival of our little place.

Frequenz-A: That's really cool to listen to such a cool history and successful squatting. It's hard to believe. We wish you a lot of strength in the ongoing struggle.

And a lot of fun!

J: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Frequenz-A: Good luck!

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