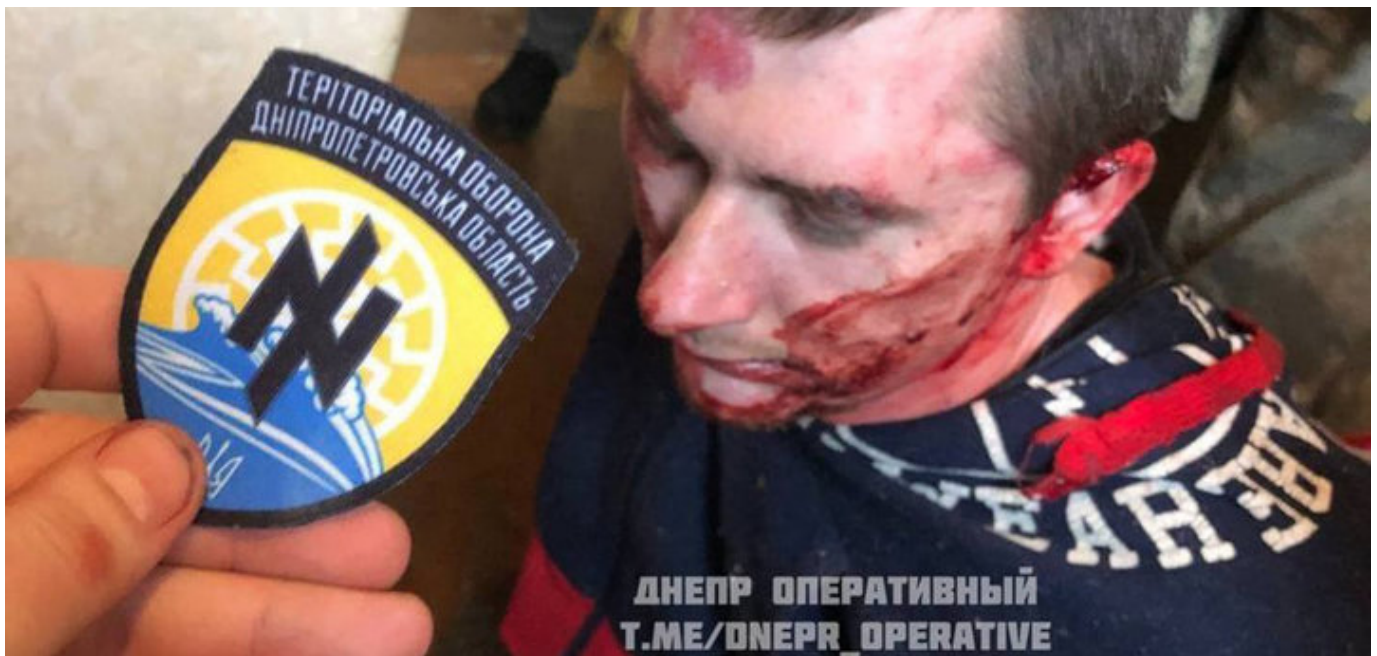# Ukrainian secret service and neo-nazis abduct left-wing activist in Dnipro

written by Susann Witt-Stahl

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The beating of left-wing activist Alexander Matyushenko on March 3 in Dnipro, documented by Azov members.

Around noon on March 3, five persons forced their way into the apartment of 31-year-old hotel clerk Alexander Matyushenko and his partner Maria M. in Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk). As the latter told jW, they were both shouted at, forced to lie on the floor, and not allowed to move. The aggressors reportedly did not disclose identification, but two of them were apparently recognized as members of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) thanks to insignia on their clothing. The officials searched the rooms, while another man in a military uniform showing emblems of the fascist Azov Battalion beat up Matyushenko to extort information. "The same person was spitting in my face and cutting my hair with a knife," Maria M. said. Accordingly, Matyushenko was beaten and maltreated for a total of two hours.

These accounts are backed up by footage allegedly posted by a thug involved in the assault on the Dnipro city Telegram channel, which has around 335,000 followers. A photo shows Matyushenko lying on the ground bleeding all over his face with a gun pressed to the back of his head. A video shows him being kicked and forced to repeatedly shout the greeting of the fascist banderists, "Slava Ukrajini – Gerojam slava!"

Matyushenko is an anti-fascist and a member of Livitsya (Left), an alliance founded by activists from various social movements in Dnipro two years ago. The left-wing organization supports strikes and uses both public rallies and publications to protest social cuts, low wages, the curtailment of democracy, and the enforced conformity of the media – which has been used by Ukrainian oligarchs to established a "right-wing consensus" in society, as Matyushenko criticized in a newspaper article in 2020. "The right-wing government and the right-wing opposition are competing in anti-communism and xenophobia."

According to Maria M., Alexander has repeatedly been subjected to attempts of intimidation in the past, both by fascists and the police. Now the repressive organs apparently want to get serious and silence him. After maltreating the man, the

officials issued a protocol and confiscated computers, smartphones and other belongings. "Then they pulled bags over our heads, tied our hands with tape and took us to the SBU building. There they interrogated us and even threatened to cut off our ears," Maria M. recalls. She was released after spending the night in a detention cell, she said. Matyushenko, however, was taken to a remand prison, where eventually a physician treated his injuries – multiple rib fractures, bruises, and lacerations to the eyes and face.

Only his lawyer has been allowed to visit him so far. Matyushenko, who says he has actually never held a gun, is under investigation as per Section 437 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code for "conducting an aggressive war or aggressive military operation," a crime punishable by 10 to 15 years in prison. At a March 26 detention review hearing, his provisional release on bail was denied. The number of reports from Dnipro about similar cases of arbitrariness of authorities is increasing: "The war is being used to kidnap, imprison, even kill members of the opposition who criticize the government," a left-wing activist told jW. "We must all fear for our freedom and our lives."

The original article was published in the [German daily newspaper junge Welt](#) on April 2, 2022.