CONTRADICTIONS

Central and Eastern European Anarchisms

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EDITORIAL

Central and Eastern Europe and Anarchist Studies: Putting It Back on the Map?

For a long time, the stories of Central and Eastern European anarchisms were not very present in reflections on global anarchism, nor reflections on the specifics of the region. It could look like only a scholarly problem, but after 2022 it also became a problem of political reflection. Putin's invasion of Ukraine divided many social movements, anarchists included, and to some extent these divisions were geographically grounded. Differences in reaction were visible, based also on who stood where, and could bring about the question: Are these differences contingent, or do they detect some deeper sources in different historical experiences of anarchist movements in various regions of the world?

Of course, the difference in position on the war in Ukraine should not be essentialized. It would be false to pretend there has been a Western-Eastern cleavage in positions towards the war. But we can identify a tendency: In the majority of Western anarchist movements (as well as in the majority of movements from the Global South), a position is formulated in the best "neither – nor" anarchist tradition, providing standard anarchist answers condemning both sides. On the other hand, the movements in many Central and Eastern European countries predominantly supported and empathized with Ukrainian anarchists who joined the struggle against the invasion. But this counterposition is also relative. Central Eastern Europe was divided: for example, in former Yugoslavia, positions symmetrizing both sides of the war prevailed, strongly augmented also by the experience of the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Thus, even in this case, regional differences played a role.

Thus, we need to talk more about regional experience. What does it mean and what political results can it produce? And how can we approach it, considering the majority of anarchist movements and thinkers in the region did not think about themselves in regional terms, and to a huge extent have absorbed influences transnationally, especially from the West and from Russia? This is something that we do not want to cast in doubt in any way, but at the same time, adopting anarchist impulses and developing

them in different contexts constitute creative activity – and this development became the basis for various stories of Central Eastern European anarchism.

Developing within workers', intellectual, or artistic milieus, anarchist groups had to adapt to the complicated reality of the region, affected by competing political powers, urban and industrial developments, and complex ethnic relations. Besides the well-known examples, such as Nestor Makhno's revolt in Ukraine, Central European anarchism shows a much deeper complexity and picturesque image, an image we wanted to present to a broader audience. We think these stories deserve not only to be narrated but also to be rethought and theoreticized.

Can we extract the most important characteristics of the region, where stories of these movements have taken place? There is one definitional characteristic of this region, which is inter-imperiality – the influences and mutual interferences of four empires: German, Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg. While in Western Europe, nations were often simply the metropolitan core of the empire, in Central and Eastern Europe nations could often look like alternatives to empire, and these alternatives were something that had to be created and fought for, not something "already there". This dynamic was complemented later on by the experience of Central and Eastern Europeans with state socialist dictatorships and rapid societal transformation after their fall. Developing an anarchist position in these contexts, in terms of both theory and practice, became the basis for many political experiences that make sense to discuss together. With this issue of *Contradictions*, we would like to contribute to opening this conversation.

The articles in this volume of *Contradictions* are mostly a result of the workshop "Anarchism in the 'Other Europe': from the 'Fin de Siecle' to the Present", which took place in Prague in September 16–17, 2022.[1] The workshop made it possible not only to discuss various national cases but also to formulate some provisory comparisons. The scope of the workshop was of course broader than the possible scope of the issue. The participation of András Bozóki, co-author of a book about Hungarian anarchism and texts about the relationship between anarchism and anti-totalitarian dissent, made it possible to discuss these previous attempts to conceptualize the regional experience of anarchism. Endre Barát showed parallels between the anarchist tradition of direct action and the radical stream of Hungarian agrarian socialists. Matti Eskelinen and Aki Lemmetyinen presented the experience of Finnish anarchism, moving our attention to similarities between the Finnish and Central European inter-imperial experience (with Finland being the northern part of our region's inter-imperiality). Kadir Yildirim joined the workshop with a paper on the Ottoman Empire's participation in international anti-anarchist cooperation, while Manuel Mireanu explored the role of state repressions in Romanian anarchism. Iveta Leitane, with a presentation on Yiddish

[1] The workshop was funded by the Czech Science Foundation, grant no. 20-15012S (Anarchism in the Context of Czech Political Culture: Presumptions, Parallels, Influences).

anarchist writer Abba Gordin, pointed out the relationship between Central European anarchism and Jewish mystics.

Considering more contemporary Central and Eastern European anarchism, Bob Kuřík showed how after 1989 the reemergence of Czech anarchism was connected with the new temporal horizon of "open time" after the fall of the state socialist dictatorship. Matyáš Křížkovský then presented on how in Czech anarchism in the 1990s and 2000s we can find class anarchism, community anarchism (connected with squats), and also "civic" anarchism connected with a hybridity between anarchism and the ideology of "civil society". Maja Wróblewska discussed anarchist aspects of the contemporary Polish climate movement as specific products of time and place. Andrej Panov provided insight into an important form of east-west anarchist communication: the presence of Eastern European migrants in Western European squats. Alexandra Wishart presented her research on contemporary national anarchists in Ukraine, showing differences between anarchist positions as well as their embeddedness both in internal conflicts within the anarchist movement and in political situations and traditions. Daria Salwerowicz and Krzysztof Hankus showed the possibilities for new development in anarcha-feminist theory in the debates on some aspects of anarchist movements in the region.

In this debate, we have identified various differences, as well as similarities and intersections across the region, namely the influence of the complicated dynamics of nation-empires competition, ambivalent relationship towards the West (often being "almost in", but never "fully", and in need of "catching up"), as well as the long-term influences of Leninist communism – converting some anarchists to communism, harshly repressing others, and discrediting the whole radical left to some extent up to the present day. Beyond these clear political characteristics, there are some more subtle aspects, especially in concepts of temporality (the influence of accelerative moments in revolutionary and even "revolutionary" moments) and spatiality (changing spaces, especially under the influence of empires and global capital), which should be developed in debates about the region.

The debates on the workshop, as well as the preparation of the issue, made us think in new ways about nature and the scope of the region. One of the key questions, particularly vital in the context of studying anarchism, is whether Russia should be included in our regionally based exploration of anarchism. We started with the idea that, unlike other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Russian anarchism is well covered and present in international debate, but then we concluded that it is mostly the case of "old anarchism" (namely stories about the few members of Russian aristocracy who in exile became the most important anarchist thinkers, less the movements in pre-revolutionary Russia), while the "new anarchism" since the 1980s shares the fate of being inadequately covered by research and underrepresented in international debate. But above all, it was clear that to engage in any debate about the war in Ukraine and its context, it would be absurd to do so without including Russian anarchists. The invasion, which was intended to divide us, once again reminded us of our common fate.

The common fate of inter-imperiality is also true about the so-called "Central Europe" and "Balkans", divided in many ideologically civilizationist (and often semi-racist) depictions of the region. For us, these kinds of divisions are completely unacceptable. For many reasons, it was quite clear that Romania and Bulgaria are definitely part of the story. The same applies to ex-Yugoslav countries, but in their case, we ultimately realized that the low participation of anarchists from Yugoslavic countries in this project probably does mean something. For example, authors like Žiga Vodovnik, David Grubačić, and Ratibor Trivunac, as well as the journal *Antipolitika* and groups like the Balkan Anarchist Network, are more intensively participating in the international discourse on anarchism. As with the Russian authors, we invited them to a conversation, and we are happy to include one of their voices in the debate about the war, but we certainly would not pretend to speak for them.

Actually, we do not pretend to speak for anybody. This issue of *Contradictions* is intended as an invitation – an invitation to develop the topics connected with Central and Eastern European anarchism the next time, in debates, in historical and social scientific research, in comparisons, and in the work of theoretical political reflection. We invite other scholars from anarchist studies from the region, as well as from the West and the Global South to engage in these exchanges. The stories of Central and Eastern European anarchism are here, and they do belong to anybody: we believe that, as with stories from other global regions, they have a lot to teach us.

In developing these issues, we met with many supportive, friendly, and collegial approaches from many of our colleagues, both from the region and from the West (we had fewer opportunities than we would have preferred to engage in discussions with our colleagues from the Global South, likely due to evident economic constraints on both their side and our side). We are grateful to them. But we must add that while working on this issue, we were also sometimes confronted with a condescending or colonial approach, presenting Western institutions (like universities, but also journals, even those stemming from social movements) as a role model for knowledge production and signalizing to us that our knowledge (often produced in conditions which would be unbearable for the majority of Western academics or sometimes even activists) is somehow backward, subordinate to knowledge produced in the West. We prepare this issue of *Contradictions* also to address this approach. We want to discuss, think together, and cooperate with our Western (and Southern) colleagues, but on equal terms. We really do not need to be westplained to, as we also do not want to eastplain to anybody.

*

The contents of this issue of *Contradictions* are divided into several parts. Firstly, we have four peer-reviewed studies, offering insights into particular topics of Central European developments of anarchisms. The first focuses on "classical anarchism" in Romania. Adrian Tătăran proposes a threefold periodization of Romanian anarchism during

La Belle Époque, revising Vlad Brătuleanu's twofold periodization: the nihilist phase (1873–1892), under the influence of Russian narodnik and anarchist movements; the anarchist phase (1892–1921), characterized by the strong and autonomous activity of Romanian anarchists; and the vegetarian and pacifist phase (1921–1946), characterized by the political marginalization of anarchists by Leninist communism and by the turn to different concepts of politics (which could be called "lifestyle" in terms of the debates that followed later). By carefully tracing transnational influences, Adrian Tătăran also develops impulses of the transnational turn, contributing to debates about it from below, as well as contributing to the debate about anarchist political culture.

The impact of anarchism in Central and Eastern Europe extends beyond its influence on movements that are explicitly and fully identified with anarchism. It is also a story of ideological influences and hybrids of various positions, as well as of aesthetical influences. While anarchism was one of the inspirational sources of French surrealism, it also had an important role in the formation of Central Eastern European avant-garde. The study of Eszter Balázs shows anarchist influences in the work of Hungarian avant-garde writer and artist Lajos Kassák, who played a key role as the initiator and leader of Hungary's historical avant-garde movement from 1915–1928 and to some extent later on. The article focuses mostly on exploring the impact of anarchism on Kassák's two journals: *A Tett* (The Action, 1915–1916) and *MA* (Today, 1916–1919). In dialogue especially with German expressionism and anarchism, Kassák developed his own avant-garde sensitivity, which included sensitivity for the topic of direct action, as well as for individual revolt and the communitarian dimension of anarchism. Thus, the article contributes both to debates about an important figure of the Hungarian avant-garde and about Central and Eastern European avant-gardes, as well as to more general debates about anarchism and avant-garde art, as developed in recent decades by authors like David Weir, Mark Antliff, and Carolin Cosuch.

The other two studies look at more contemporary developments: Miroslav Michela examines the often-marginalized story of anarchism in Slovakia. His study analyzes the emergence of Slovak anarchism in the early 1990s and its relations to punk music and street protests. The beginnings of the anarchist movement in Slovakia in the post-socialist period were rooted in a clear rejection of the previous undemocratic state-socialist regime, as well as in less clearly defined anarchist ideals. Anarchists had to reinvent the content of their anarchism and make efforts to achieve this through self-organization and wider promotion, using mostly non-violent tactics. Emphasis was placed on the principles of autonomism, which proclaimed the possibility of achieving freedom in lifestyle, without changing the way the whole society functions. The main assumption is that the history of the anarchist movement in Slovakia is intimately tied to the transfer of ideas and practices from Czechia, and that it evolved in two environments that significantly shaped its nature. The first environment comprised the alternative music scene and subcultures, especially the punk and hardcore scenes. The

second one was the emerging non-profit sector, primarily environmental, animal, and human rights organizations.

While Slovak and other anarchists tried to find their place in new liberal democracies, consolidating themselves despite some authoritarian tendencies, Belarussian anarchists had to face conditions of gradually evolving dictatorship. Gleb Koran traces one of their strategies, chosen at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s: the focus on publishing a satirical medium. *Navink*i, a Belarusian newspaper founded in 1998 by the local anarchist group Chyrvony zhond (Red Council), emerged as a Do-It-Yourself publication. By 2001, the newspaper achieved official registration and began distribution through government shops and postal services. Despite its short-lived history, facing closure by the Belarusian court in 2003, *Navinki* left a lasting impact on Belarusian political culture. The distinctive feature of *Navinki*'s satire lay in its unconventional approach, targeting not only the official Belarusian authorities but also the opposition. According to Koran, the founders of *Navinki* viewed satire as a continuation of the Situationist International tradition, employing the concept of "detournement". This involved presenting figures such as state officials, opposition leaders, or other Belarusian personalities in unique and non-standard narratives. The stories could have been based on actual events involving the subjects or have been entirely fictitious. With their satire, *Navinki* placed anarchists in the position of an alternative both towards Lukašenka and against the national democratic opposition. They can also be considered an alternative to the subsequent development of the Belarussian anarchist movement towards serious militant activity or to tendencies such as national anarchism.

The next section consists of two essays where the editors of this volume develop their ideas about possible lessons from the anarchism of this region. The essay by Grzegorz Piotrowski begins with the introduction of an analytical tool – the framing concept – intended to facilitate the presentation of the specific case of anarchism development in Central and Eastern Europe. The subsequent delineation focuses on the evolution and modifications of the anarchist doctrine post–World War II, emphasizing its substantial influence on contemporary political activism. Recognition is given to the presence of individuals within the audience possessing superior expertise in classical anarchism. Notably, it is observed that anarchist mobilizations often find their radicalizing core within anarchist circles. In the context of post-socialist countries, this resurgence aligns with historical roots, recalling the 1980s, when anarchists played a pivotal role in radicalizing anti-communist protests in Central Europe. Presently, they are frequently found at the forefront of mobilizations against far-right groups or in opposition to new government policies perceived as undermining democratic principles, such as the introduction of surveillance laws and similar measures.

The essay by Ondřej Slačálek attempts to contextualize our effort (to understand Central Eastern European anarchism as a specific tradition) into the latest developments in anarchist studies. Regarding both the epistemological and political productivity of decolonial and transnational turns, he suggests they be complemented by a regional

focus. He proposes four regional characteristics that influenced anarchism in the region (inter-imperiality; the unequal spread of anarchist ideas in the region; state socialism and post-socialism; and the importance of art connected with tendencies against its independence) and as a result, he presents five differences in the region: the different composition of anarchist ideas and movements in the classical era (the influence of the "renegades" of the Second International, ethical socialism, and spirituality); differences in the role of modernist art; differences in relations towards nation and state (nations often considered being emancipatory facing the empire; weak stateness, which could be considered as a chance as well as a problem); the impact of state socialism and the different temporality of "new anarchism"; and connected to all of this, the fall of the dictatorship and the revolutionary entrance of neoliberalism.

This volume also contains two translations of texts that are important yet mostly unknown outside of their national context: "Marriage, Family, and Free Love" (1912) by Czech Luisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1969) and "The Theory of Surplus Value and Consumer Cooperatives" by Pole Maria Orsetti (1880–1957, the text is a revised chapter of her doctoral dissertation, 1924). Both authors were important for the regional development of anarchist thought: Luisa Landová-Štychová was a leading feminist voice in the Czech anarchist-communist milieu, and after World War I, a member of the Czechoslovak parliament in the anarchist-communist group of Czech socialists, and Maria Orsetti was one of the founders and pillars of the Polish cooperatives movement and author of books about cooperatives, Fourier, and Kropotkin. Luisa Landová-Štychová, in her text, addresses problems of the emancipation of women from an anarchist perspective, with a particularly interesting criticism of love. Maria Orsetti confronts some aspects of Marxist theory from a cooperativist perspective. By translating their work (each preceded by an introduction that contextualizes them), we also wanted to bolster the stronger representation of women's voices, which are still not adequately present in either the Central Eastern European or the global anarchist movement.

The interview with Yavor Tarinski is devoted to the story of Bulgarian anarchism. It is a long and fascinating story, starting with the influences of Bakunin, Nechayev, and the Paris Commune, as well as with Hristo Botev's and others' participation in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. Tarinski then shows the history of insurrections and communes, and both the Bakuninist and Tolstoyan influences in Bulgarian anarchism. Tens of thousands of militant anarchists active in the Federation of Anarchist-Communists in the 1920s left a legacy of struggle against monarchist-fascist dictatorship, as well as against Stalinism, which led to the imprisonment of hundreds of them in Stalinist concentration camps. While the anarchist movement in Bulgaria could be reconstructed as late as the early 1990s, it is probably the only regional case where "old anarchists" from the pre-war era personally cooperated with "new anarchists" active after the fall of the state socialist dictatorship. In the interview, Yavor Tarinski not only tells the story of Bulgarian anarchists for its own sake; he shows how thinking about the anarchist past can contribute to contemporary political reflection.

There were not very many moments when anarchists from Central and Eastern Europe understood themselves in regional terms. One of the most important exceptions is the journal *Iztok* (1979–1997), published by French-Romanian anarchist Nicolas Trifon (1949–2023), who unfortunately died this year. The article about him, written by Bogdan Rusu, is not a classical obituary; the author traces not only Trifon's activity and the importance of *Iztok*, but above all, Trifon's ideas, debates with Marxism, and the development of his anarchist positions.

The most contemporary section of this issue is an inquiry into anarchists and the War in Ukraine. We have collected fourteen voices on the topic, coming from scholars, activists (including three collectives), and observers from Ukraine, other Central European countries, the West, and Russia, all replying to the same question: what does the war in Ukraine mean for the anarchist movement in Ukraine and in general? We think that this section is not only very important for our political thinking, but it also relates to and illustrates the main argument of this issue: how specific are Central and Eastern Europe, especially through the lens of the anarchist movement? This section is also an attempt at a grassroots production of knowledge and a crossing of the boundaries between scholars and militants who sometimes can – and should – become partners in political reflection and dialogue.

We end the issue with two reviews. The publication of an English selection of the great Polish socialist and anarchist thinker Edward Abramowski's (1868–1918) *Metaphysics of Cooperation*, with interpretations from editors Bartłomiej Błesznowski and Cezary Rudnicki, is an event. A reconstruction of Abramowski by Noah Brehmer (the author who himself interpreted and published Abramowski and his ideas in the book *Paths to Autonomy*) shows the intersections of Abramowski with communist ideas which came later on, especially operaist and post-operaist ideas. Another important book, Raya Dunayevskaya's *Intersectional Marxism: Race, Class, Gender, and the Dialectics of Liberation*, is not directly connected with the topic of our issue, but the review by Jonáš Kreissinger reminds us of the important and ongoing tradition of Marxist humanism, which is a natural partner in the debate on contemporary anarchism.

Grzegorz Piotrowski and Ondřej Slačálek

STUDIES

SCIENCE POPULARIZATION, PRINT ACTIVISM, AND VEGETARIANISM

An Introduction to Classical Anarchism in Romania*

Adrian Tătăran

Abstract

The main aim of the present study is to discuss some of the most relevant aspects related to the emergence of anarchism in Romania during la belle époque*, and to propose a threefold periodization of the "classical" period. Part of a broader line of research, the article focuses mainly on the first two periods (that could be considered the "heyday" of Romanian anarchism), with a special emphasis on its inaugural moments and characteristics. The paper also tries to propose a general interpretational framework based on a cultural analysis of classical anarchism and on its transnational character.*

Keywords

anarchism, anarchism in Romania, classical anarchism, political culture, transnational anarchism

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In Romania, the anarchist is a spook. For the bourgeois, he must definitely have a fierce look, shaggy hair, sometimes a noose-like tie, but always a bomb or at least a dagger in his pocket.
Eugen Relgis

Introduction

In a short text dedicated to Zamfir Arbure-Ralli, an important figure of the early anarchist movement, historian Martin Veith noted in 2011 the general lack of knowledge and research regarding the history of anarchism in Romania.[1] At the same time, the relatively rich anarchist historiography dedicated to the Bulgarian movement, and the extensive researches done in relation to the anti-authoritarian tradition in Hungary,[2] only highlighted, by contrast (and proximity), the need for a comprehensive approach regarding the subject of anarchism in Romania.

In the same year, Vlad Brătuleanu published a short article in which he tried to present the main publications, groups, and figures that existed during the "classical" period of anarchism in Romania.[3] One of his stated aims was precisely to disprove the idea, seemingly prevalent until then among most historians, that "we did not have a proper militant anarchist movement or anarchist theorists".[4]

The virtually complete overlooking of the Romanian anti-authoritarian tradition might indeed seem surprising, especially when considering that anarchism had a profound impact on the whole *la belle époque* period in Europe, whether we are talking about social upheavals, intellectual and political debates, or artistic currents. Although it did not inspire a significant popular following and did not enjoy a lasting social influence, as in France or Spain, or even in neighbouring Bulgaria, the spread of anarchist ideas in Romania should not be underestimated.

Vlad Brătuleanu's short, yet seminal, study, as well as Matin Veith's consistent efforts to bring to light Romanian anarchist history, marked the beginning of a period of renewed interest in the topic.

[1] "About nearly no other European country there is so little known on the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement as there is known about Romania." Martin Veith, "Zamfir C. Arbure: Memoirs of an Anarchist in Romania", Syndikalismusforschung, 2011, http://www.syndikalismusforschung.info/zamfireng.htm.

[2] Bozóki András and Sükösd Miklós, *Anarchism in Hungary: Theory, History, Legacies* (Boulder, Col.: Social Science Monographs, 2005).

[3] Vlad Brătuleanu's study follows the spread of anarchist ideas in Romania from the last decades of the 19th century until the end of the Second World War. I use the same interval to define the period of classical anarchism in Romania. A revised English edition of Brătuleanu's 2011 article, initially published in Romanian, appeared in 2018. See Vlad Brătuleanu, *A Brief History of Anarchism in Romania* (București: Pagini Libere, 2018).

[4] Nicolae Petrescu, "Anarhismul", in *Doctrinele partidelor politice: 19 prelegeri publice organizate de ISR* (București: Cultura Națională, 1923), p. 198.

Since 2011, Martin Veith has published several extensive researches on Romanian anarchism: one dedicated to *Revista Ideei* and Panait Mușoiu, the most prolific Romanian anarchist editor; another one documenting the life and activity of Ștefan Gheorghiu, a charismatic figure in the syndicalist movement before the Great War; and a more recent study exploring, for the first time, the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Northern Bukovina during the interwar period, when the region was a part of Romania.[5]

Other equally significant (and recent) contributions are Adi Dohotaru's detailed history of the early Romanian socialist movement, which includes a very well documented chapter dedicated to anarchists, and Călin Cotoi's *Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914*, whose compelling research reveals the important role played by various *fin-de-siècle* anarchists and revolutionaries in shaping the local perspectives on social modernity.[6]

While all these publications seem to indicate a positive turn towards the rediscovery of local anti-authoritarian histories, a comprehensive overview of anarchism in Romania has yet to be written. Over time there have been several attempts in this direction. Most of them remained, however, little-acknowledged, even within libertarian circles.

A meticulous list of all periodicals, translations, and anarchist texts published in Romania was first compiled by Max Nettlau in 1897. In a short introduction to the list, the famous libertarian historian noted that "the origins of the Romanian [socialist] movement were anarchist". Nettlau also added that the "Marxist turn" happened only later, mostly serving as a pretext for "vulgar politicians" masquerading as socialists.[7] His caustic remarks echoed, in fact, the conflict that existed at the time between anarchists, generally hostile to electoral politics, and those who favoured the social-democratic model of German inspiration advocated by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a prominent Marxist critic.[8]

[5] See Martin Veith, *Unbeugsam: Ein Pionier des rumänischen Anarchismus – Panait Muşoiu* (Lich, Hessen: Verlag Edition AV, 2013); Martin Veith, *Militant! Ștefan Gheorghiu und und die revolutionäre Arbeiterbewegung Rumäniens* (Lich, Hessen: Verlag Edition AV, 2015); Martin Veith, *Fragmente zu Anarchismus und Anarcho-Syndikalismus in der Bukowina* (Bodenburg: Verlag Edition AV, 2022).

[6] See Adrian Dohotaru, *Socialiștii: O moștenire (1835–1921)* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2019); Călin Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914: Networks and Laboratories of Knowledge* (Leiden: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Brill, 2020).

[7] Max Nettlau, *Bibliographie de l'anarchie* (Bruxelles: Bibliothèque des "Temps Nouveaux", 1897), pp. 202–203.

[8] According to Zigu Ornea, the "Marxist turn" started around 1882, when Gherea first attempted to convince socialists from Iași to denounce anarchism and embrace social democracy. Later, in 1885–1886, he summarized his ideas in a manifesto titled "Ce vor socialiștii români?" [What do Romanian socialists want?], published in *Revista socială* from Iași. See Zigu Ornea, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul* (București: Minerva, 1977), p. 129.

In 1936, Ion Ionescu-Căpățână announced his intention to publish a comprehensive history of "all libertarian movements in Romania, from 1835 to the present day".[9] He later moved to France, where he announced, for the second time, the publishing of a history documenting "a century of social movement in Romania".[10] The book was due to appear in French, in the *Artistocratie* collection of books and pamphlets. However, none of these projects materialized, as Ionescu-Căpățână died in mysterious circumstances in 1942.

The first actual overview of the classical period of anarchism in Romania appeared in 1951–1952 and was authored by Eugen Relgis, a pacifist with libertarian sympathies who had also contributed to Sébastien Faure's "anarchist encyclopaedia".[11] Titled "Libertaires et pacifistes en Roumanie", the text was published in the Parisian magazine *Contre-Courant* in 1952, after a Spanish version had appeared, a year before, in the *Cenit* magazine from Toulouse.[12]

Eugen Relgis, who relied mostly on his personal memories and notes, focused on some of the most prominent anarchist figures from Romania. His account included Panait Mușoiu, Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu, who was a utopian writer and a militant syndicalist, but also Joseph Ishill, one of the most esteemed anarchist printers at the time, as well as Ion Ionescu-Căpățână, a proponent of vegetarianism, anarchist individualism, and Esperanto. Relgis also mentioned Panait Istrati, the famous "Gorki of the Balkans", whose life and writings bore, in his opinion, the traces of an authentic and vibrant anti-authoritarian spirit.

A crucial factor in Eugen Relgis's decision to write the article was the post-war context in Romania. He was fully aware that the fragile memory of anti-authoritarian struggles was in danger of being completely effaced. The new political and social reality, shaped by the bureaucratic authoritarianism of the "popular" state, had little room for anti-authoritarian figures, histories, or ideas. Relgis also knew that this effacement will not necessarily take the form of direct, brutal suppression, but could come in more insidious and harder to combat shapes. A revealing example of what he meant was that of Panait Mușoiu, praised by state communists after his death as a "precursor of so-

[9] Ion Ionescu-Căpățână, "Prefață", in James Guillaume, *Mihail Bakunin 1814–1876* (București: Editura Umanitatea, 1936), p. 5.

[10] I found the mention of this study in another book written and published by Ionescu-Căpățână in France. See Ion Ionescu-Căpățână, *Panaït Istrati, ou l'homme qui n'a adhéré à rien: Étude suivie d'articles inédits en français* (Soutraine par Rantigny: Artistocratie, 1941), p. 3.

[11] The article he submitted to Faure's encyclopaedia presented the principles of "humanitarianism", a pacifist doctrine that Eugen Relgis developed and popularized after the Great War. See Eugen Relgis, "Humanitarisme", in *Encyclopédie anarchiste*, tome II, ed. Sébastien Faure (Limoges: E. Rivet éditeur, 1934), pp. 920–924.

[12] The French version was recently reedited as a pamphlet. Eugen Relgis, *Libertaires et pacifistes en Roumanie* (Marseille: Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme, 2018).

cialism". However, noted Relgis, the communist press conveniently omitted to mention the immense libertarian work that Mușoiu had accomplished during more than five decades of uninterrupted activity, as well as his relentless criticism of centralization, hierarchy, and dogmatism. Consequently, the short history of anarchism sketched by Relgis in 1951–1952 had more than a documenting role. It was also meant to demystify the arbitrary (and retrospective) co-options of libertarian figures into the narrative of the "popular and democratic power", which, as he bluntly put it, was neither "revolutionary" nor "popular", and definitely not "democratic".[13]

The authoritarian power of the state consolidated over the coming decades, confirming Eugen Relgis's apprehensions. The interpretation of socialist history put forward during this period generally depicted other socialist or revolutionary currents, including anarchism, as mere precursors to the communist party rule. This dogmatic understanding of history was not, however, critically examined after 1989, as one might expect. Instead, the equally dogmatic anti-communist reaction that followed fuelled a renewed disdain for these "minor" histories, interpreted through the same narrow lens. In an intellectual and political climate dominated by reductionist perspectives, studies dedicated to anarchism stagnated.[14] This also explains the virtual lack of research on this subject until the 2010s.

The interest in rediscovering the relatively unknown history of anarchism in Romania is manifold. On one hand, it corresponds to a basic historiographic concern for the preservation of local libertarian "traces" and expressions. This was the main function assumed by earlier approaches, such as Max Nettlau's or Eugen Relgis's. Another outstanding example in this regard, generally omitted, was Vladimiro Muñoz's unique biographical anthology dedicated to Romanian libertarians – Panait Mușoiu, Eugen Relgis, Joseph Ishill, Zamfir Arbure, and so on – published in English in 1981.[15]

While undoubtedly indispensable, such approaches are, nevertheless, insufficient and inherently limited. What seems to be missing from earlier accounts of anarchism in Romania is, first and foremost, a clearly defined framework of interpretation.

More recent studies seem, however, to signal a shift towards more methodologically articulated (and aware) approaches, allowing for the exploration of a wider range of

[13] Eugen Relgis, "Libertari și pacifiști din România", *Idea: artă + societate*, no. 54 (2019), pp. 154–159.

[14] During the so-called "communist period" there were, nevertheless, several attempts to document Romanian anarchist history. In 1970, a monograph dedicated to Panait Mușoiu and authored by A. Gălățeanu and N. Gogoneață was published. The former had been one of Mușoiu's disciples and, at some point, an anarchist himself. While the book is very well documented and doesn't overlook the fundamental libertarian dimension of Mușoiu's political engagement, it nevertheless tries to downplay it, presenting him primarily as a proponent of Marxism and scientific socialism. A. Gălățeanu and Nicolae Gogoneață, *Panait Mușoiu* (București: Editura Politică, 1970).

[15] The anthology was published in the Unites States. See Vladimiro Muñoz, *Anarchists: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (New York: Gordon Press, 1981).

topics in relation to anarchism. Călin Cotoi's study, for example, deploys a veritable methodological "fishing net"[16] – from detailed biographical accounts to political, social or intellectual history – in order to bring to light otherwise forgotten figures, distant events and correlations that are not immediately apparent. Cosmin Koszor-Codrea's research is another good example in this regard, as it examines, from a history-of-science point of view, the role played by Romanian anarchists in the popularization of scientific theories, as well as their efforts to set up alternative spheres of knowledge.[17]

The main aim of the present study is to discuss some of the most relevant aspects related to the emergence of anarchism in Romania during *la belle époque*, and to propose a threefold periodization of the "classical" period. Part of a broader research, the article focuses mainly on the first two periods (that could be considered the "heyday" of Romanian anarchism), with a special emphasis on its inaugural moments and characteristics.

Periodization

Vlad Brătuleanu proposes a division of the classical period of anarchism in Romania into two major phases, separated by the Great War. The first period he identifies, from 1880 to 1919, focuses on Panait Mușoiu's activity as an anarchist publisher. The second period, from 1919 to 1947, is linked to Eugen Relgis, one of the most prolific libertarian thinkers and writers, and to *Vegetarismul*, a periodical published by Ion Ionescu-Căpățână. Brătuleanu also mentions a precursor phase during the 1870s, with Zamfir Arbure-Ralli, one of Bakunin's close associates, as an emblematic personality.

Each period is thus defined according to a prominent figure and, at the same time, to a predominant strand of anarchism. Brătuleanu's overall assessment is that, in Romania, anarchism followed the same ideological developments as the broader anarchist movement in Europe, evolving from a mainly collectivist and workerist doctrine towards topics generally associated with individualism, such as vegetarianism, naturism, libertarian colonies, and so on.

While the interpretational framework proposed by Vlad Brătuleanu, with its emphasis on important publications, groups and figures, can be used as a valid starting point in approaching the history of anarchism in Romania, his periodization remains imprecise. One of the main reasons for this is that Brătuleanu focuses almost exclusively on the predominant ideological strands, as a way of determining the outlines of a period, rather than trying to define each interval in a more historically grounded manner.

However, as compellingly argued by Matthew S. Adams, political theory alone cannot offer a comprehensive perspective on the fragmented libertarian tradition.[18] Therefore,

[16] Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania*, p. 4.

[17] Cosmin Koszor-Codrea, *Science Popularization and Romanian Anarchism in the Nineteenth Century* (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini Libere, 2019).

[18] Matthew S. Adams, "The Possibilities of Anarchist History. Rethinking the Canon and Writing

the question of coherence and continuity should not be treated exclusively as a question of ideological or theoretical homogeneity. The focus needs to shift from the abstract convergence of ideas towards the actual ways in which, through specific symbolic practices, through personal connections and collective initiatives, anarchists created distinctive spheres of discourse and action.

Building upon Brătuleanu's initial research, I propose a different periodization, taking into consideration several essential aspects.

First and foremost, I would like to point out the crucial role played by the popularization of science and literature in shaping a distinctive anarchist sphere in Romania. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the importance of anarchist periodicals, as well as of personal contributions, in insuring the movement's continuity and coherence.

Last but not least, classical anarchism in Romania should be analysed as an essentially transnational phenomenon. Following Davide Turcato's analysis of Italian anarchism, I argue that the mobility of ideas and militants across various geographies, and the broad exchanges between various groups, were defining elements for the emergence and development of anarchism in Romania.[19]

The period of classical anarchism in Romania can be split into three main phases, to which we could also add a proto-libertarian stage that I do not include, however, in the present overview.[20]

The Nihilist (or "Narodnik") Phase (1873–1892)

At the end of the 19th century, Romania became a sanctuary for nihilists, "narodniks", and anarchists fleeing tsarist repression, as well as an important transit point for smuggling subversive literature back into Russia. "Bakuninists" such as Zamfir Arbure-Ralli or Nicolae Russel [Nikolai Sudzilovsky], who took part in the populist movement in Russia and later joined the anarchist movement in Switzerland, were amongst those who sought, at some point, refuge in Romania. After settling in the country, they remained active in the international revolutionary networks, while also trying to set up

History", *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, no. 1 (2013), p. 52.

[19] Davide Turcato, "Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement, 1885–1915", *IRSH* 52, no. 3 (2007), pp. 407–444.

[20] Most histories mention, for instance, Theodor Diamant's efforts to popularize Charles Fourier's ideas in Wallachia at the beginning of the 1840s, as well as his ill-fated attempt to set up a *phalanstère* in Scăieni. Also, during their exile in Paris, some of the 1848 revolutionaries became acquainted with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's and Pierre Leroux's writings. In fact, Proudhon had been one of the most influential figures among Romanian exiles at that time. Revolutionaries such as C.A. Rosetti, who later became a prominent liberal politician, were thus sympathetic to "Proudhonian" and socialist ideas. Others, such as Ion Heliade-Rădulescu, a firm (and declared) opponent of "anarchists", remained nevertheless appreciative readers of Proudhon, even integrating some of his ideas into their own political conception. See Dumitru Popovici, *Studii literare IV: "Santa Cetate". Între utopie și poezie* (Dacia: Cluj-Napoca, 1980).

local groups and to circulate socialist literature. Another important figure during this period was Nicolae Zubcu-Codreanu, a medical student from Bessarabia who completed his studies in Bucharest. He founded narodnik-inspired circles and is considered to be one of the first popularisers of socialist literature amongst Romanian students.

Not only revolutionaries from Russia found a temporary or permanent refuge in Romania. The country became, during the 1870s, a veritable hub for revolutionary and anarchist activity in the region.

A significant number of Bulgarians fighting the Ottoman rule continued their activities across the border, where they could publish papers and organize the resistance. Hristo Botev, an important figure of the revolutionary movement and "probably the first to introduce anarchist ideas into Bulgaria",[21] as Nick Heath pointed out, founded the first libertarian group in Brăila.[22] At the same time, Botev participated in socialist circles in Bucharest and established strong connections with narodnik exiles, but also with other Romanian socialists.[23]

The year 1873 marked the arrival of Zamfir Arbure-Ralli[24] in Iași, at Mikhail Bakunin's suggestion.[25] His intention was to set up a route for the smuggling of revolutionary literature into Russia. In Iași he met Eugen Lupu, the secretary of the student club and a socialist sympathizer, who helped him with the first transports. Later, Eugen Lupu started to disseminate anarchist pamphlets among students.[26] The origins of the socialist

[21] Nick Heath, "A Historical Background to the Bulgarian Anarchist Movement", in Alexander Nakov, *The Dossier of Subject No 1218: a Bulgarian Anarchist's Story* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2016), p. vii.

[22] See also Veith, *Unbeugsam*, p. 33.

[23] See Stelian Neagoe, *Nicolae Codreanu* (București: Editura Politică, 1970), pp. 18–19. Another detailed account of Hristo Botev's links with "Bakuninists" in Romania can be found in Vasile Christu, "Contribuţii la mişcările sociale din România. Doi precursori ai ideilor libertare: Hristo Botev şi dr Petru Alexandrov", *Societatea de mâine*, no. 1 (1937), pp. 16–20.

[24] Zamfir Arbure-Ralli (1848–1933) was a Bessarabian revolutionary. As a medical student he participated in the student movement in Russia, where he was part of the same group as Sergey Nechayev. After Karakozov's failed attempt on the tsar's life, he was arrested and later imprisoned for two years in the Peter and Paul fortress. He managed to escape to Switzerland, where he met Mikhail Bakunin, becoming one of his close associates and a member of his Revolutionary Brotherhood. Together with other Russian exiles and students, Arbure set up an anarchist printing press in Zürich, later moving it to Geneva. Their intention was to print revolutionary books and to smuggle them back into the Russian Empire. Under the name Zemphiry Rouleff, he participated in the 1872 Saint-Imier congress. After his estrangement from Bakunin, he continued his editorial activities in Switzerland, also befriending Élisée Reclus. After his relocation to Romania in 1878, Arbure published several volumes of memoirs, recounting his years in Russia as well as his involvement in the anarchist movement in Switzerland.

[25] The episode is recounted by Arbure-Ralli in his memoirs. Zamfir Arbure, *În exil. Din amintirile mele* (Craiova: Ralian & Ignat Samitca, 1896), p. 111.

[26] Sofia Nădejde, one of the members of the Iași circle, recalled that the pamphlets in question were authored by Elisée Reclus and Piotr Kropotkin, having been received by Lupu from "Bes-

circle in Iași can thus be directly linked to Mikhail Bakunin's and Zamfir Arbure-Ralli's efforts to establish a network connecting militants in Europe and Russia and to their attempts "to give a new impetus to the revolutionary movement in the Russian Empire".[27]

Although it was an eclectic period in terms of ideology, "Bakuninist" and "narodnik" ideas were undoubtedly prevalent among socialists in Romania. These initial anarchist tendencies had two main sources. On one hand, it was the direct influence of "nihilists" and other revolutionary exiles. On the other hand, the anarchist spirit was vitalized by the revolutionary literature brought home by Romanian students, as well as by their first-hand experience of the anarchist and socialist milieus in France, Switzerland, and Belgium.

An influential figure in this regard was Mircea Rosetti, the author of a brilliant, yet unfinished, libertarian text, published in 1882 shortly after his death.[28] Rosetti, who was known in Paris for his oratorical fervour and talent, exerted a significant moral and intellectual influence over the young socialists in Bucharest, as well as over the small Romanian revolutionary group in France, made up of students with anarchist sympathies. They also published a short-lived periodical, *Dacia Viitoare*, that appeared in 1883 in Paris, then in Brussels.[29]

In 1881, when the first laws allowing for the expulsion of radicals and political exiles were passed in Romania, the situation drastically changed for socialists, whose activities had been tolerated until then by the authorities. A banquet celebrating the Paris Commune that had been organized by the group in Iași (mentored at that time by Nicolae Russel, notorious for his "Bakuninist" views) precipitated this unfortunate turn of events.

The banquet in Iași was preceded by the assassination of Emperor Alexander II by Russian nihilists. Tsarist authorities, already infuriated by the presence of Russian

sarabian nihilists". Sofia Nădejde, "Amintiri din mișcarea socialistă", in *Amintiri literare despre vechea mișcare socialistă (1870–1900)*, ed. Tiberiu Avramescu (București: Minerva, 1975), p. 62.

[27] Arbure, *În exil*, p. 102.

[28] Mircea Rosetti's main theoretical text was titled *Stăpânii noștri sau arta de a guverna. Sfaturi date de un sclav claselor diriginte* (Our Masters or the Art of Governing. Advice Given by a Slave to the Ruling Classes). He intended to write a broad critique of the current social organization in the form of a subversive manual of "good" governance. "I will take [...] a slave", Mircea Rosetti wrote to one of his friends. "He will go to his masters and show them what they must do to keep citizens obedient. The social organisation recommended by the slave will mirror the present society in Europe." Cited in A. Răvășel, *Mircea Rosetti (1850–1882)* (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini Libere, 2020), p. 6.

[29] Tiberiu Avramescu noted that the group, which included Mircea Rosetti's younger brothers, Vintilă and Horia, but also Constatin Mille and Al. Bădărău, both from Iași, and Grigore Maniu, the author of a well-known revolutionary pamphlet titled *Eight Letters to Peasants*, "felt more attracted by anarchist agitators". They seemingly admired Émile Gauthier, "one of the apostles of anarchism", condemned in 1883, alongside Piotr Kropotkin, for his political activity. Romanian socialists, concluded Avramescu, "had been followers of Gauthier at the beginning of their organization". Tiberiu Avramescu, *Constantin Mille: Tinerețea unui socialist* (București, Editura Politică, 1973), p. 137.

political exiles in Romania, convinced the government to ban the event. Numerous arrests were made among attendees and organizers, many of whom were "nihilists". Nicolae Russel was also detained and swiftly expelled from the country.[30]

The failed Paris Commune celebration marked a turning point for the incipient socialist movement and highlighted the precarious circumstances that anarchists faced at the beginning of the 1880s in Romania.

Russel, Codreanu, and Arbure occupied an ambiguous (and increasingly untenable) political position, caught between their anti-authoritarian and socialist ideals and a local political context shaped almost entirely by state and nation-building processes. The fact that the first socialist periodical in Romania – published in Iași in 1879 under Nicolae Russel's and Zamfir Arbure-Ralli's guidance – was called *Bessarabia* is illustrative, as Călin Cotoi pointed out, for their attempts to engage, from a social and revolutionary standpoint, with the "national question".[31] By using an irredentist reference to a former Romanian province (rather than an allusion to social revolution or anarchism), they were indicating that, beyond political differences, the idea of self-determination and the opposition to tsarist absolutism was a goal they also shared with local political elites. Although their anti-imperialist and revolutionary rhetoric was not completely devoid of certain national undertones – especially in Arbure's and Codreanu's case, who were both from Bessarabia – narodniks and socialists had to face growing hostility from the state. Suspicion against "nihilists" proved, in the end, stronger than the common aversion towards Russia's imperialism. A great number of "foreign" revolutionaries were thus expelled from Romania over the coming years. The state actually started to use deportations as a weapon against the emerging workers' movement.

The wave of repression – as well as Nicolae Codreanu's tragic death in 1878, Russel's expulsion, and Arbure's quasi-complete withdrawal from revolutionary activity after 1881 – did not, however, put an end to the influence of anarchist ideas in Romania, as Călin Cotoi suggests.[32] The "disappearance" of anarchism during the 1880s, he ar-

[30] A veritable revolutionary "globetrotter", as Călin Cotoi called him, Nicolae Russel continued his journey through Europe and the United States. Years later, he moved to Hawaii, where he became the first president of the Hawaiian senate, opposing the territory's incorporation into the U.S. After the 1905 Russo-Japanese war, Russel went to Japan and devoted himself to revolutionary propaganda. An overview of his (fascinating) life and activity can be found in Călin Cotoi's book. See Călin Cotoi, "The Wanderings of a Revolutionary Globetrotter and the Metamorphosis of a Bakuninist", in *Inventing the Social in Romania*, pp. 66–77; or in Ronald Hayashida and David Kittelson, "The Odyssey of Nicholas Russel", *Hawaiian Journal of History* 11 (1977), pp. 110–125.

[31] Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania*, p. 79.

[32] "[A]narchism disappeared through the absorption of its remaining members into the 'reformatory nebula' of the fin-de-siècle, which continued the line of popularization of science — especially natural sciences, physics, chemistry, biology, Darwinism and theories of evolution." Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania*, p. 79.

gues, happened (partially at least) through its absorption into activities related to the popularization of natural sciences. Consequently, this scientific (and "cultural") turn indicated, in his opinion, a departure from libertarian political goals. It also reminded of the increasing isolation faced by anarchists and their failure to negotiate a habitable political position in the local context.

Călin Cotoi's argument is somewhat reminiscent of David Weir's observation that the political decline of *fin de siècle* anarchism coincided with the emergence of modernist aesthetics. Unsuccessful as a political ideology, Weir concluded, anarchism had found a more suitable (and successful) outlet in culture, dissolving into avant-garde artistic and literary expressions.[33]

What both authors seem to overlook is the fact that anarchist culture was not an accessory or the residual by-product of anti-authoritarian politics, but one of its specific modes of realization. The popularization of scientific theories, education, literature, or art constituted an integral part of anarchism's (counter)political praxis. Ruth Kinna referred, for example, to the continuous efforts made by anarchist to promote – through direct agitation, popular schools, and libraries, pedagogical innovations, and so on – cultures of "non-domination",[34] while Jesse Cohn spoke of a libertarian "culture of resistance"[35] inseparable from anarchist politics.

This also applies to the particular context of late 19th century Romania. The emergence of anarchism cannot be separated from the emergence of a specific (counter) discursive sphere. Hence, contrary to Cotoi's assertion, anarchism did not just vanish during the 1880s. It rather morphed into a wider and better articulated (counter)cultural movement with numerous political, social, and intellectual ramifications, aiming to challenge dominant discourses, values, and institutions; or, to use Richard D. Sonn's expression, it took the form of a wide-ranging "cultural rebellion".[36]

Local groups continued to publish periodicals and pamphlets, to form study and propaganda circles, to translate and to circulate anarchist literature. A relevant example in this respect is the 1884/85 translation of Bakunin's *God and the State*, published in Focșani. The Romanian translation was among the first translations of the famous work, originally published in Geneva, in 1882. For comparison, the first English edition, belonging to Benjamin Tucker, appeared in 1883.

[33] David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 157.

[34] Ruth Kinna, *The Government of No One: The Theory and Practice of Anarchism* (London: Pelican, 2019).

[35] Jesse Cohn, *Underground passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture, 1848–2011* (Oakland, Edinburgh, Baltimore: AK Press, 2014).

[36] Richard D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siècle France* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), pp. 3–4.

The spread of anarchism was, therefore, accompanied, not replaced, by the popularisation of scientific theories and an increasingly important literary production. This is why, alongside volumes and translations from Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Jean Grave, and Reclus, a large part of the readings and discussions were devoted to Darwin, Haeckel, Ludwig Büchner, Herbert Spencer, and the like.

An emblematic publication for this period was the literary and scientific magazine, *Contemporanul*, named after the famous Russian literary and social magazine, *Sovremennik* ("The Contemporary"). The periodical appeared from 1881 until 1891 under the aegis of the socialist circle in Iași. *Contemporanul* soon became one of the most influential papers in Romania and had an overall formative effect on the younger generation, inspiring a veritable intellectual and cultural shift or, as historian Zigu Ornea put it, a "radical change of mentality".[37] Focused mainly on discussing the latest scientific theories, from Darwinism and positivism to materialism, *Contemporanul* also touched on issues such as atheism, feminism, social and political theories, and education, and was involved in vehement literary polemics.

Although it was not an anarchist periodical as such, the publishing of *Contemporanul* was inextricably linked to the anarchist conceptions shared at that time by Iași socialists. Their understanding of science, for instance, had definite revolutionary undertones, reminding one of Kropotkin's definitions of anarchism as a comprehensive "scientific method",[38] as well as his famous "appeal"[39] urging students and young professionals to use their knowledge for the benefit of the people.

Nicolae Russel and Zamfir Arbure-Ralli, who exerted a direct influence over the group in Iași, shared a similar perspective on knowledge. "Nihilism", explained Zamfir Arbure-Ralli in his memoirs, did not represent a party, an organization or a clique, but a conviction, a way of looking at things, free from theological considerations, idealism, or dogmatism. It rested on science, not on metaphysics, authority, or tradition. "Science", he affirmed, "is the proper key to understanding the life of humanity. Yet it is not

[37] Ornea, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul*, p. 16.

[38] For Piotr Kropotkin, science was not an abstract activity or a mere theoretical exercise, but an ethical, situated, and collective practice. In a world where the education of the few was paid for by the subjugation of the many, argued the Russian anarchist, science could not claim political or social "neutrality". Moreover, co-opted by the state, or subordinated to mercantile values, science could easily become a means of justifying social inequalities and the overall status quo. See Pyotr Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism", in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 150.

[39] Piotr Kropotkin's "An Appeal to the Young", originally published in 1880 in *Le Révolté*, became one of the most influential texts for Romanian anarchists. The first Romanian translation appeared in 1886 in *Revista socială* from Iași, and was also edited as a pamphlet. The text was subsequently reedited three times, in 1907, 1916, and 1919, and published by Panait Mușoiu in his collection of books and pamphlets.

science, but activity that makes the connection with everything. Acquired knowledge implies duties. Sterile science dries up the mind. Science that serves the common good nourishes and elevates it." [40]

Another aspect worth highlighting is the fact that anti-authoritarian popularization initiatives usually took place outside (and often against) academia or other state-sanctioned institutions. This was also the case with *Contemporanul*. The publication became notorious not only for its dissemination of scientific theories, but also for its campaign against academic imposture and plagiarism. Over the years, many scientific and cultural luminaries found themselves under the unforgiving scrutiny of the "impertinent" editors who seemed always eager (and ready) to knock idols off their pedestals and to question the authority of scientific institutions. Their aim, however, was not to discredit science as such, but to emphasize the need for a popular and revolutionary (re) appropriation of knowledge, a position akin to Bakunin's relentless critique of science in the service of the state ("the government of science"[41]) and to his deeply ingrained suspicion of ruling minorities.

The publishing of *Contemporanul* was linked to the 1881 failed Commune celebration. Besides the expulsion of political exiles, the authorities also launched a series of reprisals against socialists. Ioan and Gheorghe Nădejde, two prominent members of the Iași socialist circle, were suspended from teaching, while Constantin Mille, a self-avowed anarchist at the time,[42] had to continue his studies abroad, being expelled from university.

Accused of using his teaching position to engage in "socialist politics", Ioan Nădejde, the editor-in-chief of *Contemporanul*, gave an extensive testimony in front of a university jury. He refuted the accusations, pointing to the fact that local socialists held firm anarchist views, and thus did not aspire to become "politicians". As anarchists, he argued, "we do not wish to impose our ideas and our reforms. We know that any imposed reforms are but a dead letter. We want to enlighten the masses and to make them understand the causes of their misery."[43]

As Sofia Nădejde, one of the leading members of the circle in Iași, remarked, during this anarchist period, revolution was not a question of "bombs" or attacks, but of "propaganda by word of mouth and writing".[44] The anarchists' struggle was mainly one of enlightenment and emancipation. Their main ambition was to understand and expose social ills and their roots. It was not the violent overthrow of society that preoccupied

[40] Arbure-Ralli, *În exil*, p. 39.

[41] Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 59.

[42] See Zigu Ornea, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul*, p. 128.

[43] *Procesul fraților Nădejde înnaintea juriului universitar. Socialismul în fața justiției* (Jassy: Tipo-Litografia Buciumului Român, 1881), p. 12.

[44] Sofia Nădejde, "Amintiri din mișcarea socialistă", p. 72.

them, but the possibility to bring about, through collective awareness and action, a "new world of truth, justice and love, over the old world of violence and lies".[45]

Unlike social-democrats or other socialists, anarchists did not see participation in electoral politics as a suitable means of advancing the cause of social revolution. Their suspicion against the transformation of society from the top down led them to prefer the social and cultural approach (in a broad sense), allowing them to bypass the restrictive frameworks of institutional politics. The anarchists' (counter)cultural initiatives were thus part of a logic (and a policy) of prefiguration, aiming to undermine political and religious authority, as well as the state. At the same time, the popularization of science was meant to create a wide solidarity, cutting across class divisions, and thus to inspire a radical transformation of society from the ground up. At the heart of this generous idea was the "populist" urge to "go to the people" and a revolutionary perspective infused by anarchist and egalitarian principles. A vivid and exemplary illustration of this anti-authoritarian perspective can be found in a manifesto published in Iași, in 1883. In it, anarchists reiterated their distrust of politics, their rejection of the state, as well as their devotion to science and the working classes.[46]

Starting with the mid-1880s, anarchist tendencies, predominant until then, began to be marginalized, as the socialist movement swerved towards social-democracy. The main role in this ideological shift was played by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a proponent of Marxism and a fierce critic of libertarian socialism.[47] He initiated a process of doctrinal clarification that culminated in 1893 with the founding of the Workers' Social-Democratic Party. Socialists – including previously self-avowed anarchists, such as Ioan Nădejde and Constantin Mille – embraced the model of German social-democracy and repudiated their rebellious and "youthful" convictions.

[45] Izabela Sadoveanu, "Sufletul altor generații", in *Amintiri literare despre vechea mișcare socialistă (1870–1900)*, ed. Tiberiu Avramescu (București: Minerva, 1975), p. 184.

[46] "Concerning anarchy, we will only say that we are convinced that authority is one of the greatest obstacles to the development of mankind, and that all forms of state are evil, from the most absolute monarchy to the radical republic, or even to the people's state advocated by state socialists. The future society will govern itself and all things will be regulated by free agreements and without masters. [...] Anarchists are also different from the statists in that they do not mingle in elections with the intention of going to the Chamber, knowing full well that nothing can ever be done in the Chamber. [...] I also urge young people to love the truth, to seek a better understanding of how things are in today's world and to side with the downtrodden. It is from the work of the peasant and other workers that they live and are able to study." Un socialist anarhist, "Apărarea socialismului de mai multe bârfeli neîntemeiate" (Iași: Tipografia D. Gheorghiu, 1883). Also, "Apărarea socialismului", *Dacia Viitoare*, no. 8 (1883), pp. 113–118.

[47] Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea published two polemic articles, "The Anarchy of Thought" (1892) and "The Difference between Socialism and Anarchism" (1901), in which he argued that, unlike scientific socialism, anarchism (that he caricaturally depicted as "stirnerite" terrorism) only led to crime. He consequently urged Romanian socialists to disavow anarchism. Both texts were subsequently published together as a pamphlet. See Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Anarhism și socialism* (Iași: Viitorul social, 1908).

The event was prefaced, in 1892, by a split that mirrored to some extent the First International separation between authoritarian and anti-authoritarian socialists, and the debates surrounding it. Centralization, autonomy, and revolutionary tactics were some of the themes fuelling the virulent polemic between anarchists and social-democrats in Romania.

One of the highlights of this dispute was Panait Mușoiu's expulsion from *Munca*, the organ of Romanian socialists at that time, and his subsequent removal from socialist circles. Mușoiu was accused of harbouring anarchist beliefs, contrary to the official line adopted by socialist leaders, and of publishing incendiary articles favourable to propaganda by the deed, thus exposing socialists to reprisals by the state and undermining their attempts to join the electoral process.[48]

At that time Mușoiu did not assume the label "anarchist". On the contrary, the same year he was made an outcast by Marxists and social-democrats Mușoiu published the first Romanian version of the *Communist Manifesto*. His political perspective was, nevertheless, clearly anti-authoritarian. Mușoiu's socialism was, first and foremost, a socialism without bosses and, above all, without fixed dogmas and without priests to administer them. "When the social question will be taken up for debate by each family, by each individual", Mușoiu wrote later, "when it will no longer be handed over to foreign representatives, when there will be no priests of a faith, each one being himself a priest for his own ideas, the social question will be close to being solved, maybe already solved."[49]

Anarchists gathered around Panait Mușoiu and denounced, in an open letter, the dogmatic views of social-democrats and Marxists. They affirmed that all means – legal or illegal – were acceptable in order to advance the cause of social revolution. Moreover, anarchists supported the diversity of tactics and the principle of individual and collective autonomy, opposing centralist and hierarchical organizations.

One of the signatories of the 1892 letter was Georges Levezan, the author of a famous anarchist manifesto, published in France in 1890.[50] Levezan was also linked to the

[48] At that time, *Munca*'s editor-in-chief was Ioan Nădejde, the former anarchist from Iași. He also became one of Mușoiu's main accusers. See I. Nădejde, "Un manifest anarhist", *Munca* 3, no. 11 (1892), pp. 1–2.

[49] Panait Mușoiu, "Apare evident", *Mișcarea socială*, no. 34 (1897), p. 1.

[50] Georges Levezan was a Romanian student active in the international anarchist movement. He was expelled from France in 1890 mainly for his role in writing and distributing an anarchist manifesto titled "To the Students around the World". He was also a contributor to Jean Grave's *La Révolte*. According to Marianne Enckell, Levezan had corresponded with Max Nettlau, sending the anarchist historian some corrections concerning the list of Romanian texts included in his 1897 bibliography of anarchism. Marianne Enckell, "Levezan Georges [Dictionnaire des Anarchistes]", Le Maitron, 2014, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article156235. See also "Georges Levezan: un student român în mișcarea anarhistă internațională". *Pagini Libere*, January 26, 2023, https://pagini-libere.ro/georges-levezan/.

group that published, in 1891, *Răzvrătirea* ("The Revolt"), the first anarcho-communist periodical in Romania. The young editors, who were not afraid to publicly acknowledge their anarchist sympathies, criticized parliamentarism and rejected party politics. They also supported Panait Mușoiu in his dispute with the state socialists.

The 1892–1893 events marked the end of the first period. The social-democratic shift was not, however, synonymous with the complete disavowal of anarchism by Romanian socialists. It also led to the affirmation of an autonomous and better articulated anarchist sphere of discourse and action, explicitly grounded in the revolutionary and anti-authoritarian tradition.

The Anarchist Period (1892–1921)

This period is closely linked to Panait Mușoiu's work as a libertarian editor, translator, and publisher. His activity parallels to some extent that of Jean Grave,[51] as it can also be described as "print-based" and "network-based" activism, terms used by Constance Bantman in her compelling analysis of Grave's important role as an anarchist publisher. Just like the famous French anarchist, Panait Mușoiu was an "immobile transnationalist, operating through print journalism, rather than personal mobility".[52] At the same time, he participated in numerous groups and circles, establishing connections with the broader literary intelligentsia and developing an impressive (local and transnational) network of collaborators and sympathizers. Through his uninterrupted work, extending over five decades, he ensured, in a sense, the continuity of the small anarchist movement in Romania.

Thus, following Constance Bantman's relational and biographical approach in exploring the cultural politics of *fin de siècle* anarchism, I'll try to map the development of anarchism in Romania during this period by focusing mainly on Mușoiu's life and contribution. It is a method equally used by Davide Turcato in his analysis of Italian anarchism and its key figure, Errico Malatesta.

Bantman's and Turcato's accounts are not, however, hagiographical, nor are they intended to be. If we look at the anarchist movement as a dynamic network connecting groups, publications, initiatives, and individuals, argues Turcato, then, in order to get a clearer picture of it, it is necessary to start from the most densely connected node in the network. Grave, Malatesta, and Mușoiu can be considered, each in their specific context, the historical personalities that "most closely approximate such a theoretical ideal".[53]

After his marginalization by social-democrats, Panait Mușoiu got involved in a series of short-lived editorial projects, such as the literary and scientific magazine *Carmen*

[51] Jean Grave and Panait Mușoiu were actually in touch and corresponded.

[52] Constance Bantman, "Jean Grave and French Anarchism: A Relational Approach (1870s–1914)", *International Review of Social History* 62, no. 3 (2017), p. 455.

[53] Turcato, "Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement", p. 415.

Sylva (1895) or the periodical *Mișcarea socială* (1897), that he published with his close friend, Panait Zosîn, a populariser of positivism and, later, a renowned psychiatrist.

In 1900, he started to publish *Revista Ideei* that became the most important anarchist publication in Romania. The magazine appeared until 1916, when Romania joined the war.

Revista Ideei had a broad thematic coverage and a wide reach, nationally and internationally, with numerous subscribers all over Europe and the U.S.A. Panait Mușoiu's paper functioned, in a sense, as an organ for the Romanian anarchist movement, gaining, much like other well-known anarchist publications of the time, such as *Freiheit*, *Freedom*, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, and so on, an institution-like status.[54] A wide circle of devotees and contributors gathered around the magazine.

The vast programme of "social enlightenment" that *Revista Ideei* proposed relied extensively on translations and the popularization of progressive and revolutionary texts, revealing the pivotal role that translations played in the creation of a local anarchist sphere. A self-taught man himself, Panait Mușoiu intended to put together a veritable archive (and library) of scientific, social, and political literature, for all those who were eager for emancipation and "thirsty for the movement".[55] *Revista Ideei*'s collection of books and pamphlets became the most comprehensive collection of anarchist literature in Romanian. It included over a hundred titles, mostly translations from authors such as Chernyshevsky, William Morris, John Stuart Mill, Bertrand Russell, Octave Mirbeau, Henry David Thoreau, Maeterlink, and so on. A sizeable part of his publications were, of course, dedicated to anarchist authors: Bakunin, Kropotkin, Stirner, Ernest Cœurderoy, Malatesta, Paraf-Javal, E. Armand, Domela Nieuwenhuis, and the like.

Some of Mușoiu's editions were, remarkably, the first Romanian translations; for instance, Thoreau's *Walden*, a text that he translated from a French edition, in 1936. Panait Mușoiu was, in fact, the first to introduce the American author in Romania when, in 1897, he published the famous essay "Civil Disobedience" in *Mișcarea socială*. A similar example is Chernyshevsky's influential novel *What Is to Be Done?* that Mușoiu translated in 1896. Last but not least, in 1918, Panait Mușoiu published an extended (and original) edition of Mikhail Bakunin's *God and the State*.

Romanian anarchist circles attracted a relatively high number of Jewish militants who mostly gathered around *Revista Ideei*. Panait Mușoiu had lived, in fact, for a while near Văcărești street in Bucharest, and was one of the Jewish neighbourhood's most familiar faces. Isac Peltz, the chronicler of Văcărești Street, even provided a colourful account of "Moșeanu, the anarchist" in one of his novels.[56]

[54] *Revista Ideei*, wrote Mușoiu, was not only a local publication, but wanted "to inspire all those who know Romanian, in whatever part of the world they may be." See Panait Mușoiu, "Scrisoare din America", *Revista Ideei*, no. 45 (1905), p. 93.

[55] Panait Mușoiu, "Scrisoare celor setoși de mișcare", *Revista Ideei*, no. 48 (1905), p. 120.

[56] "Moșeanu lived in a single room, brimming with books, with little space left for his iron bed and a simple desk. He would work all day long, drawing up a lengthy magazine, and in its pages

Political persecutions, as well as rising anti-Semitism, drove many Jewish anarchists into exile.[57] While they continued their political activity abroad, they also remained in contact with Panait Mușoiu and *Revista Ideei*. Especially during the first years of its appearance, *Revista Ideei* published a plethora of articles and correspondences from Jewish Romanian anarchists who had emigrated to the U.S.A. They announced, for example, the creation, in 1903, of an anarchist group in New York, made up of Jewish workers from Romania; or, in 1905, the establishment of a support fund dedicated to *Revista Ideei*, in order to make it the international "organ" of Romanian anarchists. In 1904, a small group of Jewish Romanian anarchists from Leclaire (Illinois) started their own bilingual paper, called *La Coș* (or *The Wastebasket*). Handwritten and printed in small numbers, this unique "intimate publication" was sent across the world, to comrades in France, Romania, and Switzerland.

Another representative figure of this anarchist diaspora was Joseph Ishill, a young printer from Botoșani. Introduced to anarchist ideas by Panait Mușoiu, whom he had met during his stay in Bucharest, Ishill left for New York in 1909, only to later become one of the most appreciated printers of libertarian works of his time.[58]

Panait Mușoiu's and *Revista Ideei*'s influence also reached the literary world. Just like in France, where libertarian and symbolist milieus converged for a while, the development of anarchism in Romania cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration the complex relations between anarchism and literature, and the overlapping of libertarian and literary circles.[59]

were gathered all the aces of philosophy and of classic, modern, or contemporary sociology, from moderate conservatives to the catastrophic extremists. […] From time to time the man would be visited by some pale youth, overwhelmed by their revolutionary readings and projects. […] Not enrolled in any party, beyond any discipline, they saw an ideal for life in this man." The fragment is from *Calea Văcărești*, a novel by Isac Peltz initially published in 1933. The English version of Panait Mușoiu's portrait appeared on *Pagini Libere*'s blog. See "Panait Mușoiu, the Anarchist in His Den", *Free Pages*, November 26, 2021, https://pagini-libere.ro/en/panait-musoiu-the-anarchist-in-his-den/.

[57] Jewish anarchists could be deported from the country, as the Jewish population did not enjoy full citizenship rights in Romania. A case in point is Dascălu Sava's (Solomon Abram) arrest and deportation in 1898, events that were documented in a pamphlet published and prefaced by Panait Mușoiu. The young school teacher was detained and questioned by the police over his collaboration with *Mișcarea Socială* and his alleged ties with an Italian anarchist, Polendrino. From his exile in Czernowitz, Dascălu Sava wrote an account of his experience as a political "deportee". See Dascălu Sava, *Destăinuirile unui deportat* (București: Tipografia Viitorul, 1899).

[58] A detailed account of his life and activity can be found in Paul Avrich's history of the modern school movement in the United States. See Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 231–237.

[59] Anarchists and modernist writers, especially those around Alexandru Macedonski, a prominent symbolist writer, seem to have been well acquainted with anarchist circles and publications. Some of them, such as Mircea Demetriade, a frequent contributor to Mușoiu's publications and one of

The anarchist effervescence around *Revista Ideei* was not, however, only literary or theoretical. It also inspired syndicalist organizers such as Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu, one of Panait Mușoiu's closest friends and disciples, as well as militant workers from Ploiești, Câmpina, or Brăila, who published their own periodicals and formed their own small groups.

Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu was also an accomplished writer and a translator. He authored *Arimania sau Țara Buneiînțelegeri,*[60] the only Romanian anarchist-inspired utopia, published in Brăila, as well as numerous stories depicting, in a naturalistic fashion, the life of peasants, workers, soldiers, convicts, and so on. Neagu was credited with several important translations from Kropotkin, Johann Most, and other libertarian and syndicalist authors, such as Hubert Lagardelle. At the same time, he founded and collaborated with numerous anarchist publications: *Mișcarea Socială* (1897), *Sociala* (1898) – an anarchist paper he published in his home village, Meteleu – *Revista Ideei* (1900), *Vremuri noi* (1908), *Mișcarea Socială* (1911), *Viața liberă* (1911). Neagu-Negulescu also contributed with articles to Jean Grave's *Les Temps Nouveaux* magazine. Before the Great War, he actively took part in the emerging syndicalist movement, participating in strikes, organizing unions, and trying to set up cooperatives and popular schools.

The Great War had a significant impact on the small anarchist movements in Romania. Before the war, anti-militarist pamphlets published by Panait Mușoiu were intensively circulated among workers, alarming the authorities.[61] As a consequence, *Revista Ideei* ceased to appear in 1916.

Panait Mușoiu did not resume its publication after the war. He continued, however, to publish books, articles, and pamphlets until his death in 1944. In light of the revolutionary events unfolding in Russia, some of *Revista Ideei*'s most devoted collaborators grew closer to communist political circles, which explains, at least partially, Mușoiu's growing political isolation. Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu and Mina Neuwirth, for instance, even participated, in 1921, at the founding of the Communist Party of Romania.

Mircea Rosetti's close firends, had been openly sympathetic to anarchist ideas; while others, such as George Bacovia or Tudor Arghezi, attended anarchist meetings and were in touch with Panait Mușoiu. See Adrian Tătăran, "V. G. Paleolog printre libertari", *Revista Steaua*, no. 5 (2022), pp. 5–7.

[60] The utopia was written in prison, after Neagu-Negulescu's arrest, in 1921, at the founding congress of the Romanian Communist Party. Nevertheless, *Arimania sau Țara Buneiînțelegeri* (Arimania or the Land of Goodwill) was inspired mainly by Kropotkin's writings and ideas, as well as by revolutionary syndicalism, which Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu tried to popularize among workers in Romania. The book has been recently republished in a critical edition. See Iuliu Neagu-Negulescu, *Arimania sau Țara Buneiînțelegeri* (București: Pagini Libere, 2018).

[61] Historian Martin Veith has recently published a study documenting the syndicalists' and anarchists' contribution to the movement against militarization and war. Martin Veith, *"Războiul războiului!" – Agitația și rezistența anarhiștilor și sindicaliștilor împotriva Primului Război Mondial în România* (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini Libere, 2022).

The only notable anarchist initiative after 1918 was the appearance, between 1919 and 1921, of a collection of translations from Piotr Kropotkin, Jean Grave, Paraf-Javal, Sébastien Faure, Élisée Reclus, among others. The pamphlets were published by A. Gălățeanu in Ploiești, where an important anarcho-syndicalist group had existed before the war. His obvious inspiration was *Revista Ideei* and Panait Mușoiu's work, which he tried not only to emulate, but also to continue. Later in the 1920s, A. Gălățeanu edited an anarchist periodical, *Pagini Libere*, which also published texts from individualist authors, such as G. de Lacaze-Duthiers, or libertarian pacifists, such as Eugen Relgis.

In conclusion, Panait Mușoiu and *Revista Ideei* illustrate in a peremptory manner the decisive role played by print activism (and in particular by the anarchist press) "in the cultural construction of anarchism as an identity, an ideology and a movement".[62] Mușoiu's continuous efforts to popularize revolutionary literature and to create a distinct libertarian cultural sphere gave continuity and consistence to the movement. The migration of militants, the repression of the state, the evanescent character of anarchist groups and the general lack of formal or permanent institutions emphasizes, on the other hand, the crucial significance that anarchist cultural politics had in sustaining and animating anarchist political organizing.

The Pacifist and Vegetarian Turn (1921–1947)

A spirit of dissent and revolt, actively seeking new ways to resist war, nationalism, and militarization, grew out of the shock of the war. The cornerstones of this new outlook were the need for collective emancipation and the aspiration towards a radical transformation of everyday life.

The third period of anarchism in Romania started under pacifist and individualist auspices. As Vlad Brătuleanu points out, this phase is linked mainly to Eugen Relgis's efforts to build an international anti-militarist movement as well as to Ion Ionescu-Căpățână's attempts to popularize vegetarianism in Romania.

Eugen Relgis remains one of the most prolific libertarian publicists in Romania and the most translated and circulated Romanian anarchist author. After the First World War, he began to develop humanitarianism, a non-dogmatic, internationalist, and pacifist conception.

Starting with 1921, Relgis published a series of pamphlets and manifestos, later translated into several languages, summarizing his doctrine: *Principiile umanitariste*[63] (Humanitarian principles), *Umanitarismul și internaționala intelectualilor*[64] (Humanitarianism and the international of the intellectuals), and *Apel către toți intelectualii liberi și muncitorii luminați* (Appeal to free intellectuals and enlightened workers).

[62] Bantman, "Jean Grave and French Anarchism", p. 471.

[63] Eugen Relgis, *Principiile umanitariste* (București : Biblioteca Umanitaristă, 1922).

[64] Eugen Relgis, *Umanitarismul și internaționala intelectualilor* (București: Viața Românească, 1922).

The latter was published in 1923 by the first humanitarian group he founded in Bucharest.[65] Between 1924 and 1932, over twenty groups inspired by humanitarian principles appeared in Romania. However, as Relgis later pointed out, these groups were not bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations, but the result of "free emulation", reminiscent of the early narodnik study circles, as well as the decentralized, federalist model typical of anarchist groups.[66] Moreover, Relgis's "humanitarianism" was, in his words, overtly "anti-authoritarian, anti-statist, apolitical (even anti-political). It proclaimed integral pacifism, the principle of individual autonomy and did not ignore the economic and social revolution."[67] Elsewhere, he wrote that:

> Our weapons are living, creative means; they are called love and liberty, acting through spontaneous mutual aid and the genuine solidarity that transcends the artificial boundaries of the State, national sovereignties swollen with pride, theocratic dogmas and the sham antagonism of politics.[68]

Apart from the numerous periodicals he founded over the years – *Umanitatea* (Iași, 1920), *Cugetul liber* (1927–1928) and *Umanitarismul* (Bucharest, 1929–1930) – Relgis also contributed to Ion Ionescu-Căpățână's *Vegetarismul*. The strand of radical vegetarianism promoted by the latter had definite social and ethical connotations. At the same time, as Vlad Brătuleanu compellingly argues, the conceptions exposed in *Vegetarismul* were infused with themes and ideas common to the "individualist anarchist school of thought that developed in France"[69] at the turn of the century. It was an "ascetic" strand of anarchism looking to revolutionize every aspect of individual life, in accordance with an ethical conception of liberty. Personal revolution came before social revolution and represented its fundament. The emphasis was no longer on political action, but on creating, here and now, the conditions for individual and collective emancipation. This implied, on the other hand, a radical break with the prevalent social values and the current organization of society, shaped by capitalism and the state, and a return to a simpler life, free from domination and coercion. The group around *Vegetarismul* thus started to discuss the possibility of setting up a vegetarian colony based on "mutual aid" and libertarian principles. Of course, the word "anarchism" was not used as such.

[65] The appeal gained the support of numerous libertarian intellectual figures, such as Max Nettlau, Pierre Ramus, Han Ryner, and was also signed by Panat Mușoiu.

[66] Relgis, "Libertari și pacifiști din România", p. 157.

[67] Relgis, "Libertari și pacifiști din România", p. 157.

[68] The fragment is taken from an article written by Relgis and reproduced by Vladimiro Muñoz in his biographical anthology of Romanian anarchism: "Libertarian Humanitarism". I didn't have access to the print edition of the anthology. I relied instead on a handwritten manuscript received from the Kate Sharpley Library.

[69] Brătuleanu, *A Brief History of Anarchism in Romania*, p. 14.

However, the constant references to Reclus, Tolstoi, Thoreau, and Kropotkin, as well as the publishing of articles by thinkers such as E. Armand or Han Ryner leave little doubt regarding the magazine's ideological direction. The project of a libertarian colony never materialized and *Vegetarismul* ceased its apparitions in 1933.

Ion Ionescu-Căpățână left the country in 1936 and moved to Paris, where he coordinated a press service in Esperanto during the Spanish Civil War. In 1938 he settled in a village near Paris (in Oise), in a small wooden hut, near the forest. There, he set up a library and a small printing press. In a genuine Thoreauvian fashion, Căpățână grew vegetables in the garden, printed his own brochures, and published *Cahiers de l'Artistocratie* (1939–1940) in four languages: Esperanto (Căpățână), French (Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers), Spanish (Benjamín Cano Ruiz), and Romanian (Eugen Relgis). He also hosted animated meetings of a lively libertarian circle.[70]

It is also worth noting that, although he no longer assumed an active role in the movement, Panait Mușoiu exerted a moral and intellectual influence over the small libertarian-inspired circles around *Umanitarismul* and *Vegetarismul*. One of his most important contributions in this respect was the popularization of Thoreau's writings in Romanian, as well as the publishing of Han Ryner's *Little Handbook of Individualism*[71] in his collection of pamphlets. At the same time, his notoriously frugal lifestyle, mirroring Thoreau's ideal of a simple and unburdened existence, epitomized, to an extent, the ideals professed by individualists, pacifists, and vegetarians, and added to Mușoiu's "anarchist aura".[72]

Although Vlad Brătuleanu's analysis of humanitarianism and vegetarianism is insightful and well documented, his exclusive focus on individualism as the predominant libertarian strand during this period makes him overlook the significant anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement that had developed in Northern Bukovina.

The interwar anarchist movement in Bukovina had a series of particularities that differentiated (and, in a sense, isolated) it from other anarchist initiatives in Romania. Firstly, the region had been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the war. Secondly, the big urban centres had a sizeable Jewish population. Consequently, libertarian groups were mostly made up of students and workers of Jewish descent. Thirdly, anarchists from Northern Bukovina were Germanophones. Thus, they were introduced

[70] Relgis, "Libertari și pacifiști din România", p. 156.

[71] Han Ryner, *Mic manual individualist* (București: Biblioteca Revistei Ideei, 1922).

[72] "We don't need to refrain from anything. But we have a greater longing: to live with integrity and to make every moment we live full of our existence. In our eyes, life is worthless, if in return one is enslaved. With such a price, the richest existence turns into a terrible punishment. What does it mean to live in abundance, when all your manifestations are hindered? Can you live joyfully when you are gagged at the mouth, chained at the feet, and when you cut salt with your hands? To weigh up our needs, not to exaggerate them at all and, above everything, to strive to manifest ourselves as human beings. That is our utmost desire." Panait Mușoiu, "Grija pentru prisos", *Revista Ideei*, no. 7 (1901), p. 105.

to anarchism through German pamphlets and publications, such as *Der Syndikalist*, or through Yiddish anarchist literature. *Revista Ideei* also attracted a timid, yet constant, readership in Northern Bukovina. However, the paper exerted only a very limited influence.[73] The anarchist movement that developed during the 1920s in Czernowitz slowly disintegrated during the 1930s. Many of its members had to flee the country as a result of state repression and the overall rise of fascism and antisemitism in Romania.[74]

Conclusions

The emergence of anarchism in Romania cannot be understood without taking into account the fact that classical anarchism developed primarily as a specific political culture. Through the publishing of periodicals and the establishment of reading circles, popular libraries, and schools, through songs, literature, and theatre, through public lectures and direct agitation, libertarians tried to create "parallel discursive arenas"[75] that would present an alternative to the prevalent "culture of domination", as Ruth Kinna called it.

Literary or scientific discourse (and, consequently, the popularization of science) were not placed outside the sphere of values and, moreover, of political action. The free circulation of knowledge, beyond social or national barriers, was thus a key component of the emancipatory practices developed by anarchists. This is why the spread of anarchist ideas in Romania was intrinsically linked to the popularization of science and to an increasingly diverse and rich literary production.

Another related (and recurrent) element that also explains the marked cultural dimension of Romanian anarchism is the anarchists' ingrained suspicion towards the state and centralized political power in general. This did not mean a complete detachment from political struggle, but rather the adoption of a consistent and active (counter) political position, contesting the equation of the social with state politics. Anarchists sought to act directly at a social and economic level, and thus to bypass (and subvert) the existent political framework.

[73] G. Ganait, *Anarhismul în Bucovina de Nord. O scurtă istorie (1925–1935)* (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini Libere), p. 3.

[74] Two anarchists from Northern Bukovina, Mechel Stanger and David Stetner, later published their memoirs. They both deserted from the Romanian army and continued their political activities abroad. Mechel Stanger fled to Germany, where he befriended Rudolf Rocker, and then moved to France, where he met Emma Goldman, Nestor Makhno, and Peter Arshinov. Stanger also took part, as a non-combatant, in the Spanish Civil War. He was an anti-militarist and an Esperantist. After an adventurous journey through Europe, David Stetner found refuge in France where he founded an anarchist Yiddish periodical, *Der Freie Gedank*, that ran until 1966. See Mechel Stanger, *Amintirile unui anarhist din România: de la Cernăuți la Berlin și în Spania revoluționară* (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini Libere, 2021).

[75] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990), p. 67.

At the same time, we should not overlook the crucial role played by the anarchist press in the spread of anti-authoritarian ideas and practices, and especially in the emergence of a vibrant libertarian (counter)discursive sphere. Papers such as *Revista Ideei* acted as points of convergence (or "nodes"), giving coherence to an essentially fluctuating network of groups, individuals, and initiatives.

The scope of these networks extended beyond national boundaries. *Revista Ideei*, for example, had subscribers and contributors from all over Europe and the U.S.A. This aspect was also illustrated by the significant number of translated texts sent for publication, as well as by the close connections that existed with other anarchist periodicals from places like France, Germany, and the United States. Translation became a preferred political and cultural strategy, also bringing to light the transnational pattern of emergence and development of classical anarchism in Romania. On the other hand, anarchists such as Georges Levezan, Panait Mușoiu, Eugen Relgis, and Ion Ionescu-Căpățână fully participated in the international anarchist movement, attending meetings and congresses, publishing in the international anarchist press and corresponding with militants all over Europe.

A noteworthy (and related) aspect is also the fact that the origins of the anarchist movement in Romania were intrinsically linked to migration and exile. Constantly changing geographies, identities, and cultures, anarchists tended to blur national, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. The case of Paraskev Stoyanov is revelatory in this respect, yet not singular: born in Romania, active in the international anarchist movement in Switzerland, France, and Italy, he later became one of the forerunners of Bulgarian anarchism.[76]

Equally illustrative are the destinies of Jewish anarchists who had to flee Romania, like Joseph Ishill, Moriss Maier, Nath. Finkelstein, Mechel Stanger, David Stetner and Eugen Relgis. Thus, anarchists from Romania spread around the globe, to Bulgaria, France, Germany, Spain, the United States, Uruguay, Sweden and Japan (like Nicolae

[76] Paraskev Stoyanov was born in 1871, in Giurgiu, where his father, like many other Bulgarian revolutionaries at the time, had taken refuge in order to escape persecutions from Ottoman authorities. He translated into Romanian several of Errico Malatesta's pamphlets, initiated anarchist circles amongst students in Bucharest, and is recognized as one of the important figures of the early Romanian anarchist movement. At the same time, Stoyanov is considered one of the forerunners of anarchism in Bulgaria and was also active in the international anarchist movement. He knew Élisée Reclus, whom he met during his stay in Switzerland, but also historian Max Nettlau, who visited him in Bucharest. Expelled from Switzerland and from Italy for his political activity, Stoyanov returned to Romania and then Bulgaria, where he eventually settled. There, he became one of the initiators of the Federation of Anarchist Communists of Bulgaria. All this time, he remained in connection with anarchists from Romania. Stoyanov corresponded with Zamfir Arbure-Ralli and with Panait Mușoiu, and was a constant subscriber to *Revista Ideei*. A short note dedicated to Paraskev Stoyanov was published by Marianne Enckell in the biographical dictionary of anarchists. See Marianne Enckell, "Stojanov Paraskev Ivanov (aussi Stoianoff, Stojanow) [Dictionnaire des Anarchistes]", Le Maitron, 2014, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article156289.

Russel). Following in the wake of these journeys, Romanian anarchist publications appeared in Paris, Brussels, and Leclaire (Illinois).

One of the conclusions to be drawn from this analysis is that the anarchist movement in Romania had a transnational scope (and functioning); a characteristic shared with movements from other geographies as well (as Davide Turcato's analysis of Italian anarchism illustrated). However, Romanian anarchists sometimes had an ambivalent position towards nationalism and national construction. As already discussed in the case of "narodnik" revolutionaries from Bessarabia, they acknowledged the "national question" and tried to integrate it into their anti-absolutist and anti-authoritarian struggle. This ambiguous position mirrored in a sense the situation of Bulgarian revolutionaries, such as Hristo Botev, who were fighting against imperial domination and, at the same time, for national liberation.

Another telling example concerns the irredentist position assumed by the editors of *Dacia Viitoare*, a publication banned in the Austro-Hungarian Empire because it was trying to draw attention to the fate of Romanians living in Transylvania. The political model proposed by the young anarchist editors resembled Bakunin's federalist model: a federation of communes, bringing together all the territories inhabited by Romanians, freed from the imperial yoke. Just like Bakunin in 1848, they attempted to reconcile national liberation, anti-imperialist struggle, and social revolution. At the same time, they denounced the existing Romanian state and called for its dissolution.[77]

All in all, there are several aspects that define the contours of classical anarchism in Romania. Thus, the emphasis on individual emancipation and collective self-education, the efforts to set up alternative, non-elitist spheres of knowledge and interaction outside of state-sanctioned discursive arenas, as well as the intrinsic transnational scope of the movement are the common threads that run through all the three periods that I have tried to outline.

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[77] Gr. Munteanu, "Situațiunea socială a Ardealului și ideia federațiunii", *Dacia Viitoare* 1, no. 11 (1883), pp. 164–168.

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ANARCHISM AND THE AVANT-GARDE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Lajos Kassák's Magazines in Budapest during the 1910s

Eszter Balázs

Abstract

This paper explores the connections between anarchism and the classical avant-garde in early 20th-century Central Europe, focusing on Hungarian writer and artist Lajos Kassák. Analyzing Kassák's avant-garde magazines, A Tett *(1915–1916) and* MA *(1916–1919), the study examines the interplay between anarchism and the avant-garde that shaped cultural modernity in Hungary during the last years of the dualist Monarchy and its aftermath. In the midst of World War I, Kassák's magazines served as platforms for radical aesthetic experimentation, challenging norms, and embodying anarchism culturally. The analysis traces Kassák's initiation into anarchism through anarcho-syndicalism, influenced by figures like Károly Krausz, Count Ervin Batthyány, and Emil Szittya, that shaped both his political and aesthetic sensibilities. Exploring Kassák's international influences, including anarchist literature and ideas from figures like Bakunin, Proudhon, and Élisée Reclus, the paper unveils the intellectual foundations of Kassák's modernist aesthetic. Kassák's radical modernism is analyzed as "anarchist aesthetics" (André Reszler), emphasizing artistic freedom and the integration of art into everyday life. The study argues that Kassák's magazines, born in a vibrant European anarchist culture, achieved cultural*

success as anarchism declined politically in Europe post-1900. This paper contributes to an understanding of the interplay between anarchism and the avant-garde in Hungary during a crucial period marked by WWI and social upheaval, thereby filling in gaps in the existing research.

Keywords

Lajos Kassák, anarchism, post-1900 anarchism, avant-garde, radical modernism, cultural anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, artistic freedom, World War I, revolutions after World War I

While the interplay in the West between anarchism and art in the early part of the 20th century has been researched extensively,[1] and has been quite well studied in the case of Russia as well,[2] the affinities between anarchism and the classical avant-garde in Central Europe remain largely unexplored. Trying to partly fill up this lacuna, my paper explores the interplay of anarchism and the avant-garde through the example of writer and artist Lajos Kassák's first two magazines, which were the only avant-garde manifestations in literature and visual art in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy during the 1910s, at a time when anarchism was still a lively way of thinking within the broader European cultural context. (In the 1920s, anarchism as a political ideology became simply irrelevant in Hungary as well as in Europe, with the exception of Spain.)[3] However, the vector of anarchism had changed since 1900 when many anarchists, being faced with their isolation from politics at large, were driven toward culture as the only means of disseminating their ideology.[4] Paraphrasing David Weir, I would argue: thanks to Kassák's avant-garde project anarchism succeeded culturally in Hungary where it failed politically.[5] It proved that anarchism was also a culture, because its politics were impossible to realize. Thanks to anarchism, Kassák's two magazines, founded in 1915 and 1916 respectively, became what they were: diverse, non-hierarchical, transnational, and defying the most basic artistic conventions.

[1] See, for example, Ondine Eda Le Blanc, *Anarchism, Gender, and the Avant-garde Word* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1994); David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture. The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Patricia Leighten, *The Liberation of Painting: Modernism and Anarchism in Avant-Guerre Paris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Carolin Kosuch, ed., *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde: Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[2] See, for example, Nina Gourianova, *The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Russian Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

[3] The twenties – characterised by the *retour à l'ordre* – as a post-revolutionary epoch ceased to be a prosperous time as regards the influence of anarchism.

[4] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 4.

[5] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 5.

Founded during World War I, the Hungarian literary and artistic avant-garde was intensively influenced by anarchism and libertarianism (both of which were the least political of all the recurring political ideologies[6]) until the aftermath of the conflict. While there are many studies about the Hungarian avant-garde manifestations within the aesthetic field, neither Kassák nor his movement have been systematically analysed regarding "the connections between the avant-garde and the cultural discourses of currents"[7] such as socialism, revolutionary socialism, or anarchism. As a matter of fact, I would like to present the role anarchism played in shaping the ways that the early Hungarian avant-garde formed the ideas of cultural modernity as a transnational movement based in Budapest. In my analysis, I aim to answer the question as to whether there was any mechanical application of the general thesis of the philosophies of anarchism. Or can one instead talk about a specific anti-authoritarian and libertarian sensibility concerning the aesthetic of Kassák's magazines? By claiming André Reszler's theory (*L'esthétique anarchiste*), I try to demonstrate that anarchism was more present in Kassák's first magazine as "anarchist aesthetics" and culture than via ideological theory.[8] As Michael Scrivener stresses, in the footsteps of Reszler, the anarchist aesthetic had three major aspects: "1) an uncompromising insistence upon total freedom for the artist, and an avant-garde contempt for conservative art; 2) a critique of elitist, alienated art and a visionary alternative in which art becomes integrated into everyday life; 3) art as social critique – that is, since art is an experience, it is a way to define and redefine human needs, altering socio-political structures accordingly."[9] More precisely, I would demonstrate that while during WWI and its aftermath anarchism as a political ideology was present only to some degree in Kassák's magazines, as "an aesthetic philosophy referring to 'radical revolution' in art and life"[10] it was, however, prevalent.

The Early Career of Lajos Kassák: From a Factory Worker to the Making of a Writer

The principal platforms of Kassák's avant-garde movement's activity during WWI and its aftermath were *A Tett* [The Action] (1915–1916) and *MA* [Today] (1916–1919), both magazines were edited in Budapest, and they diffused radical aesthetic ideas and works.

[6] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 97.

[7] For my analysis of such discourses, I used, among other secondary sources of literature, Hubert Van den Berg et al., ed., *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries, 1900–1925* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2012).

[8] André Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste* (Paris: Press universitaire française, 1973). Nina Gourianova developed some of the key statements of her book in the footstep of Reszler's thesis. See Gourianova, *The Aesthetics of Anarchy*.

[9] Michael Scrivener, "The Anarchist Aesthetic", *Black Rose* 1, no. 1 (1979), p. 7.

[10] See Nina Gourianova, "Gambling Anarchically: The Early Russian Avant-Garde", *Cultural Studies Art & Anarchy*, no. 2 (2011), p. 60.

They were important for several reasons. They were a perfect form for experimentation, a creative laboratory for the avant-garde movement. Also, they demonstrated progress in the field of media structures. With the perspective of a large international circulation of ideas and images being placed in the concrete social space of a magazine, these platforms assured the diffusion of avant-garde art and against traditional art they served as media of auto-representation and reflexion.

Just before launching his first magazine in 1915, Kassák – this former blue-collar worker – was already a writer increasingly recognized in the Hungarian literary field. He came from a socially underprivileged group, partly industrial working class, from multicultural Érsekújvár (Nové Zámky) – at that time the Northern part of historic Hungary. Kassák spoke Hungarian as his mother tongue but with a recognizable "Slovakian" accent. He became a worker at the age of 12 and soon began to work as an industrial worker in various factories, in Győr and in Budapest. As a politically educated and organised factory worker, he was energetically involved in rent movements, strikes, and demonstrations. On at least one occasion, as reported in the press, he was elected chairman of the strike committee of 1200 female workers at the jute (textile) factory in Újpest (industrial suburb of the Hungarian capital), where he was momentarily employed. His writing (mainly poetry) was first praised by the social-democratic press as "working class literature", but in time it was recognized by the mainstream ("bourgeois") press as well and so he progressively lost this tag. The change in his social setting occurred after 1909, when he left on foot for Paris and, after his return to Budapest, did not return to work in a factory: he instead turned into a half proletarian/half bohemian writer and began to spend his time in cafés as writers with a middle-class background did.[11] However, he preferred Café Meteor to Café New York where, for example, writers of the high modernist *Nyugat* review were gathering. In his early years, the romantic Sándor Petőfi, and – from contemporary writers – the symbolist Endre Ady, later the naturalist-expressionist Béla Révész (for a while, director of the literary chronicle of *Népszava*, the social-democratic daily), and the expressionist Dezső Szabó, an early mediator of Futurism, influenced him. At the beginning of WWI as the author of already two books – a short novel and a drama –, he lived from publishing poems and short novels. In the spring of 1915, he published a third book – a poetry volume – entitled the *Epos in the Mask of Wagner* stressing the Gesamtkunstwerk-like aspect of the war as a grandiose and overwhelming event. The book referred directly to the celebrated German composer, who was the author of a revolutionary essay entitled *Art and Revolution* (which Kassák was able to read thanks to the fact that it was translated into Hungarian in 1914) and was praised in the international anarchist tradition as

[11] Eszter Balázs, "Baloldaliság és munkásszubkultúra Kassák *Egy ember élete* című önéletírásában az első világháborúig. A „Gyermekkortól" a „Kifejlődésig"" [Leftism and working class subculture up until the First World War in the autobiographic novel entitled *Life of a Man* by Lajos Kassák], *Múltunk* [Our Past], no. 2 (2013), pp. 83–105.

well.[12] In its form and content, Kassák's poetry volume was a halfway futuristic, halfway expressionistic approach to the conflict, neither entirely pacifist, nor directly pro-war. Nevertheless, six months later, *A Tett* [The Action], Kassák's first magazine, which he founded in October 1915, was already a proper anti-war project[13] for which he took inspiration from the German Expressionist *Die Aktion* founded by Franz Pfemfert. The title, such as was the case with *Die Aktion*, had a strong anarchist connotation. In addition, at that time Kassák was so devoted to anarchist culture that he wore a Russian-type (collarless) black shirt, a clear reference to Russian anarchists on a photograph that was made of him in an atelier in 1915 (taken by photographer Dénes Rónai).

Influence of Anarchist Thought on and Political Connections to Anarchism of the Young Kassák

For all these qualities, Kassák took inspiration from classical anarchism, which had emerged in the 1860s. In the 1880s, when the anarchist movement more forcibly entered the European political scene, the term "propaganda by the deed" (*propagande par le fait*) appeared in the Hungarian press as well, referring to a specific political direct action – a terrorist activity – serving as a catalyst for revolution in the Western world in general.[14] Anarchism had more reverberations and even caused trepidation in Budapest when, in 1898, the Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary Elisabeth of Bavaria was assassinated by the Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni. When Kassák chose "the deed" as a title in 1915, it was completely obvious that he wanted to stress a strong sympathy with the pre-war international anarchist tradition in general, but in a period when the active terrorist phase of anarchism was already long over. At the same time, by this term, Kassák also wanted to emphasize that real deeds could only be realised through art and not war. He wanted to express anti-war politics through an inherently aesthetic manifestation. His ideal of political-cultural integration was exactly the opposite of what the war press and state institutions emphasised by praising military deeds on the front. Incidentally, the international avant-garde responded to the conflict in diverse and often conflicting ways. While some movements, such as the Italian Futurists, passionately embraced a pro-war stance, others, such as the German expressionists, predominantly criticized the war. Many Parisian cubists – those who were not conscripted – were dispersed or became muted for a moment. While Kassák initially tried to stress the advantages of

[12] Wagner became familiar with the thoughts of Proudhon and Bakunin in the 1840s.

[13] For an analysis of *A Tett* and *MA* from a periodical studies perspective see Éva Forgács and Tyrus Miller, "The Avant-Garde in Budapest and in Exile in Vienna", in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol. III: Europe 1880–1940 (Part II),* ed. Peter Brooker, Sacha Bru, Andrew Thacker, and Christian Weikop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 1128–1156.

[14] Andrea Kozáry, "A 'tett propagandája'. Az anarchisták az 1880-as években Magyarországon" [The "propagande par le fait". Anarchists in the 1880s in Hungary], *Múltunk* [Our Past], no. 4 (2000), pp. 224–257.

the Great War for Hungary, he very soon became critical of the war, earlier than most of his counterparts did, and he became progressively radically anti-war: when he founded *A Tett* in October 1915, he was already completely against the war.[15]

First, I will present the way in which Kassák was personally initiated into anarchism and what were his anarchist sources. As a unionist factory worker, he became a very young member of the Hungarian Socialist (Social-Democratic) Party. However, for him the socialist movement was too hierarchical and counterproductive from the point of view of workers' emancipation,[16] consequently he adopted more radical views and soon became attracted to anarcho-syndicalism via the circle headed by Károly Krausz, an "anarchist theorist" according to the Hungarian police keeping him under observation.[17] Károly Krausz promoted the Hungarian gnostic philosopher Henrik Jenő Schmitt's Christian anarchism, that rejected violence, and he founded the illegal Budapest Group of Revolutionary Socialists that declared itself to be anti-parliamentarist and antimilitarist.[18] Thanks to Krausz's circle, Kassák was influenced by the idea of anarcho-syndicalism that stressed direct action and strikes[19] and also heard the anti-authoritarian ideas of Count Ervin Batthyány and József Migray, both of whom were major figures in Hungarian anar-

[15] See Eszter Balázs, "Avant-Garde and Radical Anti-War Dissent in Hungary – A Tett (1915–1916)" in *Art in Action. Lajos Kassák's Avant-Garde Journals from* A Tett *to* Dokumentum *1915–1927*, ed. Eszter Balázs, Edit Sasvári, and Merse Pál Szeredi (Budapest: Petőfi Literary Museum–Kassák Museum, Kassák Foundation, 2017), pp. 33–52. The expression *war culture* refers to the totalization of war promoted by the discourses and representations that characterized societies involved in WWI; the main themes were the glorification of the homeland, elevation of patriotic values, legitimation of violence, etc. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau Annette Becker, 1914-1918, *Understanding the Great War*, (London, Profile, 2002), 102–103.

[16] This information gleaned from his autobiographical novel, *Egy ember élete* [*The Life of a man*], published in the 1920s, as well as from an article he published in 1915. See also András Bozóki and Miklós Sükösd, *Anarcho-demokraták. Az anarchizmus elmélete és magyarországi története* [Anarcho-Democrats. The theory and history of anarchism in Hungary] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2007), p. 134. Articles summarizing the 2007 book in English are András Bozóki and Miklós Sükösd, "Third Way Utopianism: Anarcho-Democratic and Liberal Socialist Ideas in Central Europe" in *Utopian Horizons, Ideology, Politics, Literature*, ed. Zsolt Czigányik (Budapest: CEU Press, 2017), pp. 77–101, and Gábor Andrási, "A fiatal Kassák Lajos a szocializmusról" [Young Lajos Kassák on socialism], *Literatura*, no. 4 (1979), pp. 387 and 389.

[17] András Bozóki, and Miklós Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary. Theory, History, Legacies*. Transl. Alan Renwick (CHSP Hungarian Studies Series, 7. Wayne, New Jersey: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2006), pp. 125–126. Nevertheless, while in his autobiographical novel of the 1920s – an era when anarchism was already in rapid decline – Kassák stressed the anarchist thought that had influenced him, he avoided explicitly declaring himself to be an anarchist or a syndicalist, or even having been one during the previous period. See Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete* [The Life of a Man], Vol. II (Budapest: Magvető, 1983), p. 90.

[18] Bozóki and Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary,* pp. 126–127.

[19] Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, Vol. II, p. 90. This autobiographical novel by Kassák was published in a series during the 1920s.

chism and advocates of school and teaching reforms in Hungary.[20] In 1904 they published, alongside with Schmitt, their lectures in a book entitled *Anarkizmus (Anarchism)*.[21] The year after, in 1905, Batthyány set up a libertarian reform school for peasant children on his estate in Bögöte, where the Marxist-Syndicalist thinker and militant Ervin Szabó attended the opening ceremony, and the socialist agitator Lajos Tarczai was made head teacher. Batthyány's idea of anarchism was most strongly influenced by William Morris, author of *News from Nowhere*, and Peter Kropotkin, though in 1906 he would advocate a strategic unity between socialists and anarchists in his *Socialism and Anarchism*. The next year Batthyány started the anarchist periodical *Társadalmi Forradalom* (Social Revolution), in which his views evolved in the direction of anarcho-syndicalism. While Batthyány came from the aristocracy, József Migray was a former mason who, around 1900, worked as a teacher and a journalist and was also a proofreader at the Athenaeum printing house. In 1897, he edited the first youth workers' newspaper in Hungarian, *Előre* [Avanti], and published poetry as well as books on school and teaching.

Beside Krausz's circle, another source for anarchist theories was the Central Library of Budapest where the Marxist-Syndicalist thinker Ervin Szabó served as a librarian since 1904. Moreover, between 1911 and 1918, he held the position of director at the library. In that library Kassák might have had access to several anarchist books. We know for sure that Kassák had read *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* by the anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin that was translated into Hungarian in 1908 – a work stressing the principle of communal self-organisation and non-domination. Kropotkin in his otherwise modest thinking about art interpreted this as "groups of operators" and their creative power, and that could have had an effect on Kassák's later activity as a founder of an avant-garde movement based also on a collective spirit and self-organization.[22] In addition, Kassák, who could not speak any foreign languages, might have read Hungarian translations of such works by Kropotkin as *The Memoirs of a Russian Revolutionary* (Hungarian edition: 1912), as well as *An Appeal to the Young* (Hungarian edition: 1908). He might have had access to the *Die direkte Aktion* by Arnold Roller (1907), too.[23] All of these books are still

[20] Bozóki and Sükösd, *Anarcho-demokraták* [Anarcho-Democrats], p. 134.; Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, Vol. I, pp. 246–247 and 547.

[21] Kassák heared Batthyány and Migray delivering a lecture, which was also published in a book, see Ervin Batthyány, József Migray, and Jenő Henrik Schmitt et al., ed., *Anarkizmus.* A Társadalomtudományi Társaság által rendezett felolvasó-, ill. vitaüléseken tartott előadások [Anarchism. Lectures organized by the Society of Social Sciences] (Budapest: Politzer, 1904).

[22] Arnold Roller, *Die direkte Aktion. Revolutionäre Gewerkschafts-Taktik* (New York: Freiheit Publishing Association 1907); Kropotkin, *A kölcsönös segítség mint természettörvény* [*Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*], trans. József Madzsar (Budapest: Népszava, 1908); Kropotkin, *Az ifjakhoz* (*An Appeal to the Young*), n.d., n. p.,1905. Concerning the term "groups of operators" in Kropotkin, see André Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, p. 53.

[23] The slogan of *direct action* was first propagated from France, but quickly spread among the workers of other European countries. Literally, these words mean the direct struggle of the workers

the property of the Central Library. It is not without reason that the Central Library was later labelled a distributor of "Bolshevik, Syndicalist, and Anarchist" books by the right-wing counter-revolutionary press in the autumn of 1919.[24]

Beside Kropotkin, Kassák had knowledge about Mikhail Bakunin's anti-statist theories as well – but only through secondary sources since Bakunin was not translated into Hungarian until the 1980s.[25] Both of these prominent figures in Russian anarchism perceived socialism as an antidote for individualism (liberalism), which they saw as a manifestation of the "bourgeois" principle in politics. Nevertheless, regarding the arts, they were less interested. The anti-individualist Bakunin, when he was not characterised by an anti-art stance, was ambivalent about the value of art. Kropotkin likewise thought of art in terms of its usefulness to progressive politics.[26] However, Kassák was able to convert the "nihilist anarchism"[27] of Bakunin into a modernist aesthetic incarnated by his avant-garde magazines. And one can suppose that it was thanks to the inspiration from Kropotkin's *Appeal to the Young* (Hungarian translation: 1905), among other sources, that Kassák was able to motivate young writers and visual artists to use their creative abilities, through his avant-garde magazines, to serve toward the transformation of society and, since 1918, the revolution. The influence of the French Joseph Proudhon, another leading figure of classical anarchism, was also substantial for Kassák, as his poem entitled *Mesteremberek* (Craftsmen), published in *A Tett* in late 1915, shows (see below). Also, Kassák learned about the French geographer Élisée Reclus, who used to be a Proudhonist mutualist of the Commune of 1871, while attending conferences at a free school based in Budapest and named the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* [Society for Social Sciences]. It was convened by the Marxist-Syndicalist thinker Ervin Szabó who took up syndicalism as well.[28]

One should also mention, as a contemporary intellectual source about anarchism, the nonconformist novel titled *Sanin* by the Russian writer Mikhail Petrovitch Artsybashev (1907), which scandalised Russian readers and was prohibited in many countries. *Sanin*, influenced by Stirner's and Bakunin's anarchist theories and translated into

against the employers, the direct struggle of the working class against the entrepreneurial class. By direct pressure on the employers, the desired reforms are to be introduced by the workers themselves. Direct action can take many forms: it can even be peaceful, but under the general heading of "direct action" also belong the revolutionary terrorist attack, economic terror, personal terrorism against hated exploiters, etc.

[24] Anonyme, "A bolsevizmus melegágya, A Városi Könyvtár üzelmei" [The nest of Bolshevism. The doings of the Central Library], *Uj Nemzedék*, October 10, 1919, p. 5.

[25] On the Russian anarchist thinkers prior to WWI, a study of Plekhanov (*Socialism and Anarchism: Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin*), a study of Emil Laveleye (*Apostle of the Rebels: Bakunin*), and a study of Ervin Szabó (*Marx and Bakunin*) were accessible in Hungarian.

[26] Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, pp. 45, 52–53, and 56. Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 34.

[27] Reszler, *L´esthétique anarchiste*, p. 40.

[28] Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, Vol. I, pp. 352–353.

Hungarian in 1909, was about ignorance of all social conventions in seduction and which testified, according to a Hungarian critic, that "the political revolution [the 1905 Revolution] changed into an erotic revolution".[29] In any case, the Hungarian authorities regarded the novel as being so dangerous that they confiscated it and brought the translator, Endre Szabó, to trial, thereby involuntarily encouraging a great interest of the Hungarian readership in *Sanin* – they were probably not only worried that sexual liberation would influence or even transform social institutions, but also because of the presence of some revolutionary Russian émigrés in Budapest.[30]

A Personal Initiation into Transnational Anarchist Networks Thanks to the Vagabond Friend, Emil Szittya

Kassák learnt about Bakunin (whom he could not read due to the lack of any Hungarian translation) during his European journey in 1909, when he was frequenting anarchist circles in Paris and Brussels. In those days anarchism was already isolated from the political life of the West, but at the same time it took on a stronger cultural identity.[31] As David Weir explains, as soon as anarchism as a politics was "eclipsed by nationalism and socialism, the heterogonous, fragmented culture that emerged at the same time looked a lot like anarchism. Anarchism succeeded, not as politics, but as aesthetics. (...) [and] the politics of anarchism was transformed into the culture of modernism by a number of artists who gave aesthetic expression by political principles."[32]

During his European journey, Kassák frequented these circles with his vagabond friend Emil Szittya.[33] Having a Jewish background, Szittya, alias Adolf Schenk, had chosen a pseudonym referring to his "ancient" Hungarian roots by a semi ironic–semi serious gesture in order to (over)stress his assimilation. Szittya took his interest in anarchism from Ascona, the Tolstoyan-anarchist community of Monte Verità where he visited in 1908.[34] Also, Kassák first heard from his vagabond friend about the 1905 Russian Revolution in which anarcho-communist groups had played a major role. Szittya remained in contact with Parisian anarchist circles even after their 1909 trip: he spoke up at a meeting of the German anarchist club in Paris in 1910, where he was pointed towards Bakunin and the biologist Ernst Haeckel, who were referred to as

[29] Aegrotus [?], "Szanin" [Sanin], *Az Ujság*, July 21, 1908, p. 8.

[30] Editors, "Szenvedély" [Passion], *Színházi Élet*, no. 48 (1918), p. 1.

[31] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 135.

[32] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 157.

[33] Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, Vol. I, p. 408. Regarding Szittya and the 1909 Parisian journey, see Magdolna Gucsa, "Introduction to the Cultural and Social History of Vagrancy" in *On the Road 1909. Kassák, Szittya, Long Poems, Short Revolutions*, ed. Edit Sasvári and Pál Merse Szeredi (Petőfi Literary Museum – Kassák Museum, Kassák Foundation, Budapest, 2022), pp. 367–382.

[34] Magdolna Gucsa, "Why Don't We Know Who Emil Szittya Was? The Problem of In-Betweenness in the International Avant-Garde," in *On the Road 1909*, p. 414.

leading anarchists, according to an informer of the French police.[35] Ernst Haeckel was a biologist, a propagandist of "monism" and Darwinism. Even though he distanced himself from socialism and did not align with the anarchist movement or ideology, he did exert influence on some anarchists. As Magdolna Gucsa, author of a recent thesis on him points out, Szittya was familiar with a restaurant and anarchist meeting place on street Saint-Honoré run by a certain Italian anarchist, Bergia. But, as she also notes: "Because Szittya only sporadically stayed in France between 1910 and 1915, this would have made any potential charges against him difficult to prove."[36] All in all, Szittya was rather a strong anarchist sympathizer and not a true activist, despite the fact that the French police had a file on him as an "anarchist" during the years prior to WWI, as did the Hungarian secret police until the 1930s.[37] Szittya had a much stronger cultural identity related to anarchism than a political one: he was co-founder of transnational magazines like *Les Hommes Nouveaux* (1909–1912), in which he published anonymously and under a pseudonym (Jack Lee) a series of articles titled *Der Anarchismus und die Schönheit* (Anarchism and Beauty). During 1914–1915 he became co-editor of the Zurich-based transnational avant-garde periodical entitled *Der Mistral* that in the course of its three issues gradually became critical of the war. Anarchist affinities and connections remained constant throughout Szittya's life: editing the German-language *Die Zone* in Paris of the 1930s was based on his previous anarchist network.[38]

While Kassák sympathised with the creative-destructive ideology of anarchism à la Bakunin as well as the collectivist ideal of Kropotkin, Szittya was drawn to the unconventional and individualist anarchism of Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas on ethical individualism rather than to anti-state political egoism as an anarchist strategy.[39] Kassák evoked his experience in the Parisian anarchist circles, to which Szittya introduced him, in a "report" entitled *Dávid, az anarchista* [David the Anarchist] as early as 1915 in the literary review of Hungarian high modernity, *Nyugat* [West]:

> "From our Batthyányian anarchist group [Budapest Anarchist Group founded by Ervin Batthyány] through the dives of Munich and Brussels, I was thrown by memory among the free fans of Paris, into the barracks of two *sous* of the Quartier-Latin, where I heard the colourful torrent of world-changing words from the

[35] Magdolna Gucsa, "Vagabond, metic, artist. Reconstructing Emil Szittya's intellectual mobility and migration patterns between Budapest, Berlin, and Paris" (PhD diss, Eötvös Lóránd University of Humanities – École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2023), pp. 55 and 63.

[36] Gucsa, "Vagabond, metic, artist", p. 64.

[37] Gucsa, "Vagabond, metic, artist", p. 179.

[38] Gucsa, "Vagabond, metic, artist", pp. 243–244.

[39] Bozóki and Sükösd, *Anarcho-demokraták,* p.141. Andrási, *A fiatal Kassák a szocializmusról* [The young Kassák on Socialism], p. 384.

> lips of so many boorish outcasts (...). Anarchists were members of the faction that wants to force the wheels of capitalism off the world's neck by childlessness, by the barrenness of the proletariat. They believed firmly in the coming of the new world, and they themselves were already crunching away their days on a communist basis, on peas and onions. They had few demands, worked little, as if they lived only for the enthusiastic debates (...)."[40]

Back in Hungary, late 1909, Kassák became disillusioned with politics whether it was socialist or anarchist. His disappointment corresponded to the fact that anarchism, even on the level of the European scene, lost its sense of immediacy and no longer held its position as the ideology of the workers' movement. But neither did the socialist movement prove to be strong enough in Hungary. Workers still did not have the right to vote: a situation that not even the great Budapest strike of 23 May 1912, organized by the socialists, could change. The strike was drowned in blood by the Hungarian police and as a consequence Kassák, who personally took to the streets, turned his back on workers' politics and, in a sense, on political vanguards.[41] In early 1914 he instead took a position (not openly) in the so-called "proletarian poetry" debate in line with the Marxist-Syndicalist Ervin Szabó, claiming against the official intellectuals of the Social-Democratic Party that art cannot be subordinated to class politics.[42] This time, in the footsteps of the radical and individualist writer Dezső Szabó – one of the first mediators of Futurism in Hungarian culture, who propagated in his theoretical essays of the years preceding the Great War anarchistic ideas about art-making without rules[43] – Kassák invested his anti-authoritarian sensibility into literature and artistic practice. Henceforth, he was more attracted to anarchism as a cultural sensibility and opted for the creation of a radically "new literature" both in form and content.

Interconnections between Anarchism and the Avant-Garde

As Sanin's example also shows, Kassák's interest in anarchism was not only rooted in proper political thought and practice. In the early 20th century, Kassák could lay on a more specifically cultural tradition of anarchism, too. As a matter of fact, modern

[40] Lajos Kassák, "Dávid, az anarchista. Riport" [David, the anarchist. Reportage], *Nyugat*, no. 10 (1915), pp. 573–575. (Translation by Eszter Balázs)

[41] For Kassák's experience in the great strike of 1912, see Eszter Balázs, "A vérvörös csütörtök és Kassák első betiltása" [The bloody Thursday and when Kassák was first banned by a censor].

[42] On the debate between Ernő Bresztovszky, assistant editor of the social democratic *Népszava* and the unorthodox Marxist Ervin Szabó, see Andrási, "A fiatal Kassák Lajos a szocializmusról" [The young Kassák on socialism], p. 380; Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, Vol. II, p. 184.

[43] Dezső Szabó, "Futurizmus, az élet és művészet új lehetőségei" [Futurism: New possibilities of life and art], *Nyugat*, no. 1 (1913), pp. 16–23. Similarly to Marinetti, Szabó took the Symbolists' subversive attitude as a model.

subversive art, because of its cross-mediality and cross-aesthetic intentions,[44] as well as a presentiment of the unknown, was associated together with anarchism in Europe – especially in the last decades of the 19th century. The unknown as a core of revolution in art and life was defined in *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* (1858) by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon,[45] who was the first person to declare himself an *anarchist*, using that term. So, towards the end of the 19th century, more particularly in France, some symbolist writers and artists transposed radical criticism of social norms into the field of art by calling themselves the avant-garde.[46] The term avant-garde had mainly been a political term until then, and only became a cultural term afterwards.[47] These artistic avant-gardes and classical anarchism started to overlap with each other from the last third of the 19th century, leading to them jointly opposing the symbols of the authorities (the parallel movements of the two avant-gardes had existed since Henri de Saint-Simon[48]).

A major moment in this encounter was when Kropotkin published an anarchist periodical titled *L'Avant-Garde* in 1878 in Switzerland and, although this was essentially a socio-political magazine, Kropotkin himself was interested in how art could be invested into revolutionary politics.[49] Similarly to Proudhon, he also talked about the "cult of the unknown" that he personally linked to the veneration of the authentic popular art of the Middle Ages.[50] Another was when "in his *Paroles d'un révolté*, published in Paris in 1885 at the very time that the symbolist movement was getting under way and only two years before Gauguin referred to his own art as 'synthetist-symbolic', Kropotkin had indicated that realism was inadequate for expressing the revolutionary idea still

[44] Van den Berg et al., ed., *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries, 1900–1925*, (Preface), p. 11.

[45] Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, pp. 10, 18–19.

[46] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*: *Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press Book, 1987), p. 112; Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, pp. 75–78.

[47] "The concept moved from military to political during the French Revolution. Shortly afterward, Henri de Saint-Simon introduced a model of a state-technocratic socialism with society led by a triumvirate of professions: the artist, the scientist, and the industrialist. This notion of "avant-garde" as a characterization of the social role of art was aesthetic and political. In the mid-19th century context of industrialization, the avant-garde merged art with modernity. Prior to the First World War, it diversified into Cubism, Futurism, and the activities of artists such as Picasso and Duchamp." David Cottington, "Origins: Emergence and Consolidation 1820–1914", in *The Avant-Garde. A Very Short Introduction*, ed. David Cottington (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2013), abstract, https://academic.oup.com/book/716/chapter-abstract/135384641?redirectedFrom=fulltext.

[48] Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, p. 75.

[49] Donald D. Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", *Leonardo*, Vol. 3, no. 1, Jan. 1970, p. 81.

[50] Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 10.

lacking in the art of his own day. (…) The influence of anarchism on artists and writers thus reached its peak toward the end of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth century during the very period when 'modern' art was developing."[51]

The next step happened in the early 20th century when emerging ultramodern art trends were using radical literary patterns, and critics began to link radical politics to radical art. Futurists, who partly took inspiration in the symbolists' works (see Filippo T. Marinetti's early years as a writer), were specifically tagged as anarchists and were seen as a major threat to peace and order. In 1908 writer, philosopher, and art critic G. K. Chesterton[52] noticed how the attitude of an artist was similar to that of an anarchist; they both despise governments and conventions in the name of freedom of self-expression.[53] These examples prove that in the early 20th century the overlapping between the two avant-gardes that had been more separated in the past was acknowledged by society due to a common denominator that was the rebellion against institutions and systems of values as well as a so-called capacity of leading the line of march to the future.[54]

Why is it Legitimate to Call Kassák's First Avant-Garde Magazine Anarchist?

After presenting the pluralism of the different branches of anarchist thought that had a decisive impact on Kassák prior to WWI, as well as his experience in anarchist circles in Budapest and in Brussels and Paris, I will claim that in Kassák's magazines of the 1910s aesthetic practice became a form of political action thanks to its adopting from the beginning cultural anarchism. After Kassák had stopped accepting the war as normal in the course of 1914 and early 1915, he launched these magazines as an artistic response to the profound crisis created by the war. Cultural anarchism represented a prospect of "restoring a form of society" and served as an "antipolitical alternative to politics", offering a potential remedy for the perceived loss of integration across various aspects of life.[55] Publications in *A Tett* wanted to reconcile the individualist ideal with collectivist theory. On one hand, there were some contents that overtly dealt with the subject of anarchism reflecting a pluralism of anarchist thought. An essay by Zoltán Haraszti, a journalist and writer, titled *From Letters to God* mirrored, for example, an ontological

[51] Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 82.

[52] Kassák published him as well but only in late 1918: *G. K. Chesterton írásaiból* (Hevesi Sándor fordítása) [From the writings of G. K. Chesterton (transl. Sándor Hevesi)], *MA*, no. 12 (1918), pp. 149–151.

[53] See Michael P. McKeating, "Chesterton and Anarchism", *The Chesterton Review* 44, no. 3–4, 2017, pp. 592–595; Paul Wood, "The Avant-Garde in the Early Twentieth Century" in *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde. Art and Its Histories*, ed. Paul Wood (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 185.

[54] Wood, "The Avant-Garde in the Early Twentieth Century", p. 75; Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, p. 113.

[55] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 260.

anarchism boosting creative energies despite the slaughter: "Anarchism is sacred as well, as it is singing hymns to joy, whilst the blue roses of cadavers are emitting their scent all over the world (...) The awakened man will bring the gods new strength."[56] This essay is also a good example of how not all approaches to anarchism gave priority to collective interests; they could be melting into individualism (the cult of creativity) and libertarianism as well. While Haraszti's interpretation was rather based on Henrik Jenő Schmitt's ideal anarchist theories that were committed to a strategy of nonviolence (and so rejecting any war), there were other interpretations, too. Tivadar Raith, who had come back from Paris to take part in the first mobilizations and probably sent his short novel to Kassák from the front, put in focus the dystopic aspect of philosophical anarchism. His anarchism was based on Bakunin's ideas by also referring to the brutality of the current war. In his short story published in *A Tett*, "the frisky old gentleman" – namely God – symbolised destruction instead of construction. God was playing with human beings like chess-pieces and, when upset, put the whole universe he created on fire.[57]

Kassák himself made an explicit tribute to anarchism (both as a political theory and practice) of the recent past by publishing in *A Tett* his short novel (written in 1913) titled *Anarkistatemetés* (The Funeral of an Anarchist).[58] The motto chosen for his writing clearly showed his inspiration, taken from a painting by the Italian futurist painter Carlo Carrà titled *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* (*I Funerale dell'anarchico Galli)*. (Carrà was an eyewitness at the funeral of the Italian anarchist Galli, a victim of police oppression during the general strike in 1904 in Italy that turned into a fight between anarchist protesters and the police. Like Giacomo Balla or Paolo Buzzi, as a futurist artist Carrà was a supporter of the anarchist movement.) However, Kassák did not publish the futurist Carrà's work that he had previously seen at the Exhibition of Futurists and Expressionists in Budapest in 1913, most likely because he could not afford to print any reproductions due to the war of 1914-18 when the international circulation of cultural products became difficult. Also, the fact that Italy and Austria-Hungary had already become enemies by that time did not help either. Additionally, this work by Carrà made it quite clear that futurism was very much influenced by Italian anarchism, and Kassák, thanks to his short story referring to Carrà, could first stress his own affinities with the European anarchist tradition (anarchism was the most influential in Mediterranean countries), and second, the interrelation of ultramodern trends, the so-called "isms". In addition, by his poem – probably written during the winter of 1914–1915 – entitled *Mesteremberek* (Craftsmen), which he only published a year later in the magazine *A Tett*, he gave tribute to Proudhon, the father of anarcho-mutualism who early in the 19th

[56] Zoltán Haraszti, "A betűktől az istenig" [From Letters to God], *A Tett*, no. 2, 1915, p. 39.

[57] Tivadar Raith, "A játékoskedvű öregúr" [The frisky old man], *A Tett*, no. 2, 1915, pp. 30–31.

[58] Lajos Kassák, "Carlo D. Carra 'Anarkistatemetés' című képe alá (novella)" [Under the painting by Carlo D. Carra entitled *Burial of an anarchist* (a short novel)], *A Tett*, no. 2, pp. 25–28.

century had praised the idea of a society populated by worker-artists.[59] This idea of the master-craftsman, rooted in the tradition of the medieval guild, conveyed a desire for the synthesis of personal and social concerns. Kassák could have had access to Proudhon's ideas thanks to Georgi Plekhanov's pamphlet *Szocializmus és anarchizmus* (Socialism and Anarchism) that was translated into Hungarian in 1897.

Anarchism with a cultural identity also appeared by way of the translations of the American poet Walt Whitman in *A Tett*. Whitman could be seen as a precursor of anarchist thought whose individualism expressed, in free verse, "a blend of the politically unconventional and the aesthetically innovative".[60] Similarly to Charles Baudelaire, he incarnated a romantic sensibility to the progressive, urban scene "which allowed at once for the perpetuation of the past and for the making of modernity".[61] As David Weir said, Whitman had a reputation for being the "poet of liberty": because of his free verse, he served as "an anarchist cultural hero", a model of politico-aesthetic egoism to later modernist writers.[62] Also, Kassák intensely published in *A Tett* the anarchist inspirited French avant-garde from around 1909, which was connected with post-symbolism and Henri Bergson's anti-rationalism.[63]

The issue of *A Tett* (no. 2, November 1915) in which the apparent tributes to pre-war anarchism were published was confiscated by Hungarian authorities at the printing house, thus the issue never made it into circulation. (Ultimately, Kassák succeeded in publishing his short story in the next issue – thanks to the diffuse nature of Hungarian wartime censorship.) Both Kassák's and Raith's short novels were regarded with suspicion of their anarchist contents by Hungarian authorities, according to the contemporary press.[64] Anarchism had been seen as dangerous since as early as the 1880s in the Hungarian part of the dualist monarchy and, still in 1913, secret agents were officially paid to keep an eye on "anarchist, socialist and other similar movements,"[65] proving that anarchism was still seen as a major threat to Hungarian society.

In the second issue of *A Tett* there was another piece of artwork that the authorities could find dangerous to the social order in the context of the current war, namely an

[59] Lajos Kassák, "Mesteremberek" [Craftsmen], *A Tett*, no. 3, 1915, p. 42. On Proudhon, see Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 38.

[60] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 141.

[61] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p.169.

[62] Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 170.

[63] Merse Pál Szeredi, "The International Horizon of A Tett" in *Signal to the World*: *War, Avant-Garde, Kassák* . In Gábor Dobó and Merse Pál Szeredi (Budapest: Kassák Foundation, 2016), pp. 71–72.

[64] Anonyme, "A Tett-et elkobozták" [A Tett was confiscated], *Pesti Hírlap*, no. 318, November 15, 1915, p. 7; Anonyme, "Elkobzott szépirodalmi lap" [The confiscated literary magazine], *Világ*, no. 318, November 15, 1915, p. 7.

[65] Letters from the part of the National Police Headquarters to the Ministry of Interior, National Archives of Hungary, K149-1914-3-84 (August 19, 1913–July 19, 1914), pp. 85–126.

expressionist painting, titled *Krisztus siratása* [Lamentation of the Dead Christ] that was judged to be transgressing conventions of academic art – thereby violating war representations.[66] This work by Peter Dobrović/Péter Dobrovits, a Hungarian citizen of Serbian descent, was an example of strategic pacifism practiced by expressionist artists, typical of the first half of the war. Probably both the anarchist connotation of the above quoted texts and the anti-war character of Dobrović's painting provoked the authorities, who decided to confiscate the issue in question. Afterwards, not at all surprisingly, nobody in *A Tett* declared himself (or herself, as there were a couple of female writers as well) to openly be an anarchist. Neither was the topic of anarchism treated any more. Moreover, Imre Vajda, a non-conformist socialist, was even critical of anarchism in one of his texts published in *A Tett*: he praised rational understanding, progress, positivism, and socialism, which he even (indirectly) contrasted with "extreme syndicalism" and "chaos".[67] At the same time he asserted that "social democracy falls short of the ideals of *A Tett*, although it believes in socialism."[68] Maintaining such a distance from anarchism on the part of this eccentric socialist thinker stresses not only the plurality of the authors writing for *A Tett*, but also the rivalry between anarchist and socialist thought within the Hungarian avant-garde movement.

Nobody any longer explicitly extolled their anarchist affinities in *A Tett*. An exception was when Kassák publicly rejected an anti-anarchist political article titled the "Budapest anarchistái" [Anarchists of Budapest]. The author was Károly Gallowich, a writer from the first issue of *A Tett*. Instead, Gallovich published his fulmination in the liberal conservative review *Magyar Figyelő*, which was close to the government.[69] His gloss, in which anarchists are compared to "the seeds bearing unhealthy fruits that will be expelled by the fertile Hungarian soil," Kassák took as a personal offense.[70] His reaction was harsh for a reason: the confiscation of the second issue was probably ordered because it was suspected of spreading anarchist ideas. This general silence on the subject of the anarchist thought after the second issue of *A Tett* also might have

[66] Péter Dobrovits, "Krisztus siratása (Kompozíció: A Tett elkobzott számából)" [The lamentation of Christ (A composition from the no. 2 issue of *A Tett* being confiscated)], *A Tett*, no. 8, 1916, a visual reproduction of the painting following page 128.

[67] Imre Vajda, "Világnézet" [World view], *A Tett*, no. 5, 1916, pp. 69–70.

[68] Vajda, "Világnézet" [World view], p. 70.

[69] Károly Gallovich, "Budapest anarchistái. A magyar tolsztojánusok" [Anarchists of Budapest: The Hungarian advocates of Tolstoy], *Magyar Figyelő*, Vol. I, 1916, pp. 360–364. While Kassák published his response in *A Tett* – (Editors), "Budapest anarchistái" [The anarchists of Budapest], *A Tett*, no. 4, 1915, p. 68 – on the pages of *Magyar Figyelő*, it was Pál Bartos, a member of Krausz's illegal Budapest Group, who responded to Gallovich (Pál Bartos, "Magyarország, anarchizmus és demokrácia" [Hungary, Anarchism and Democracy], *Magyar Figyelő*, 1916, Vol. I, pp. 300–303.); Szittya did not intervene in the debate and his articles on anarchism were published elsewhere than *A Tett* during WWI.

[70] [Editors], "Budapest anarchistái", p. 68.

been deepened by the fact that in the Great War "the anarchist movement split over the issue of nationalism versus internationalism so sharply posed by the war, as the non-violent, social democratic, version of Marxism did also".[71] Nevertheless, a general anarchistic spirit based on a sense of opposition towards the mainstream cultural norms and institutions as well as the challenging of the conventions of their day remained at that time in force in *A Tett*. (It was not Kassák, but Szittya – with whom Kassák had not been in contact with since 1916 – who wrote in the course of WWI about the anarchists' various attitudes toward the conflict, and this in the pro-government *Magyar Figyelő*, which probably paid him better than any other paper.)[72]

Regarding the authorities, one can only suppose that the main reason for the confiscation of the second issue of *A Tett* was the obvious anarchist character of some of the writings published there. However, as regards the moderate critics, mostly classical modernists, we have even evidence that they labelled Kassák's movement as anarchist when calling Kassák and his fellow writers' writings a "literary anarchism".[73] In a broader European context, this appellation referred to a specific aesthetic drive that was understood as the making of art without rules.

But did these moderate critics have the right to label Kassák's and his fellow writers' publications as anarchist even in the issues after the confiscation of the second – obviously anarchist – issue? Having decided not to publish any more writing that referred directly to the different branches of philosophical anarchism, Kassák continued, in effect, to pay tribute to anarchism, but through the demonstration of creative energy based on an anti-authoritarian sensibility as well as via literary and cultural publications. In practice this was oriented towards the creation of a new aesthetic system, which he called "new/newest literature". Conceived rather metaphorically under the influence of the Futurists, anarchism served to legitimise new aesthetic practices: the liberty of creativity stood against hegemonic practices such as academic clichés and a more general bourgeois cultural hierarchy of values.[74] New radical aesthetics were often presented by Kassák and his fellow writers with references to anarchism that worked as violations of the cultural and aesthetic norms of the time. All the issues of *A Tett* helped to valorise

[71] Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 82.

[72] Between 1914 and 1919, Szittya stayed in Budapest and regularly published in the Hungarian press. "In his articles dealing with war propaganda, peace movements, and the war policy of neutral countries, he could fit in both a pro-government and an opposition paper, as he combined criticism of capitalism with nationalism" (Gucsa, *Vagabond, metic, artist*, p. 311).

[73] Mihály Babits, "Ma, holnap, és irodalom (Schöpflin Aladárnak)" [Today, Tomorrow and Literature (to Aladár Schöpflin)], *Nyugat*, no. 17 (1916). See Mihály Babits's debate with Lajos Kassák on literature: György Kálmán C., "A modern konzervativizmus hagyományának kialakulása – Babits vitája az avantgárddal" [The emergence of the tradition of modern conservatism – Babits' debate with the avant-garde], *Danubius Noster*, no. 1–2 (2014), pp. 85–96.

[74] See, in general, Van den Berg et al., ed., *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries, 1900–1925*, p. 12.

this new *aesthetics of anarchism*, whose main features were listed by André Reszler and developed further by, for example, Nina Gourianova.[75] Being anti-authoritarian, Kassák and his fellow writers maintained distance from the concept of the great artist, such as by rejecting the legitimacy of the masterpiece, and so on. As their publications reflected, they were advocates of a literature in a spontaneous situation, as a function of the moment and the place, born of the living spirit of the community (an idea coming from Proudhon and that was transmitted by French Symbolists to later generations[76]). Transposing the concept of direct action from the field of social action into the sphere of art, Kassák and his fellow writers invited the artist to engage (as Kropotkin previously suggested[77]) and wanted to destroy everything that separates art from life. By appropriating the Romantic theories on the synthesis of the arts (via Wagner) to give them a political and social dimension as well as an aesthetic one, art according to Kassák will be a creative force of collectivity. The writers of *A Tett* thus succeeded in entrusting art with a social mission, while at the same time, under the influence of individualist anarchism, opening it up to the moment, to the eternity of metamorphosis. They were claiming that art, freed from the constraints of history, will evolve freely, with no rules limiting it, which was mainly reflected in the cross-aesthetic and transnational focus of *A Tett* – such as in the use of metaphors of endlessness (cosmos, sun, and so on). This new aesthetic system was based on what Nina Gourianova calls in relation to the early Russian avant-garde "an anarchic anti-canonicity" and an expansion of "artistic space by deconstructing the aesthetic clichés of 'the ideal' and 'beauty'".[78] The rejection of old aesthetic clichés was reflected as well in the choice of language, consequently "*A Tett* appeared coarse, jagged, and courageously innovative".[79] The use of disruptive techniques, a sharp sense of militancy, the praise of nonconformity, the exploration of the new horizons of creativity, and trust in the final victory of change over tradition were obvious proofs of the influence of anarchism.[80] Also, thanks to the program-manifesto of March 1916, Kassák made clear in *A Tett* his sympathy with anarchism when he demanded a leading position for the "new literature" and announced the messianic project of creating a "new man" who will be the creator of a new society.[81] Nevertheless, the program was also an affirmation of the progressive republican vision of a secular state instead of a hatred of the state. Between 1914 and 1918, anarchism and the state

[75] Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, p. 5–9.

[76] Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste,* p. 21.

[77] Reszler, *L'esthétique anarchiste*, pp. 8–9.

[78] Gourianova, "Gambling Anarchically", p. 79.

[79] Forgács and Miller, "The Avant-Garde in Budapest and In Exile in Vienna", p. 1129.

[80] Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, pp. 145–146.

[81] Lajos Kassák, "Programm" [Program], *A Tett*, no. 10, March 1916, pp. 153–154. Bozóki and Sükösd, *Anarcho-demokraták*, p. 135.

were not in many cases as antagonistic as they had been before the war: the hatred of the state, favoured by anarchist thought, did not work during WWI since the state had become predominant due to the total war nature of the conflict, and the idea of the state disappearing was no longer considered feasible or relevant. There was a hidden touch of anarchism in the most apparent cultural sense, too: Kassák declared in the manifesto an unwillingness to choose a dominant "-ism" that expressed a single leading aesthetic trend, which is based on the anarchist principle of the rejection of any hierarchy, and which can be seen as being indicative of an inner paradox of the "aesthetics of anarchy".[82]

And last, but not least, anarchism served as the main reference point for cultural revolt, helping to place the constructive spontaneity of free creation and action against the destructive chaos of war, too. So even the radically anti-war stance of *A Tett* can be understood in the framework of anarchism: the contradictory elements proper to the avant-gardes defined by Antoine Compagnon (destruction-construction, negation-affirmation, nihilism-futurism), and which "mirrored in the 'creative-destructive' nature of anarchism" (as Nina Gourianova stresses for the early Russian avant-garde),[83] appeared in *A Tett* in the framework of the war: destruction and nihilism was symbolised by armed conflict while construction and affirmation were incarnated by Kassák's movement using symbols of peace and new society (joy, sun, cosmos, and so on).

Between Anarchism and Communism. The Turmoil of Revolutions 1918–1919

As we have seen, mainly because of censorship problems, anarchism was completely transformed into the culture of modernism in Kassák's first magazine, *A Tett*, in the wake of its second issue. The aesthetic expression of political principles was even more evident in the second magazine called *MA* [Today]. It was founded after *A Tett* was banned for political reasons in October 1916, namely "internationalism" and its anti-war stance. After this crisis, referring to anarchism as being a politics, not surprisingly, completely disappeared from the pages of *MA*. However, anti-establishment and anti-war attitudes, as well as self-governance (all of which can be considered to be anarchist principles), combined with humanism, formed a continuity with *A Tett*. And *MA*, more than *A Tett*, emphasized in its published texts that sexual liberation had the potential to revolutionize social institutions – which can be seen as another feature of the "aesthetics of anarchy". Also, a synthesis of arts was even more encouraged by *MA* than its predecessor. Moreover, some art works by foreign artists reproduced by *MA* were also strongly shaped by anarchist ideology, such as Umberto Boccioni's *Unique*

[82] Gourianova, "Gambling Anarchically", p. 59.

[83] Nina Gourianova, "The Early Russian Avant-Garde 1908–1918: The Aesthetics of Anarchy" (PhD diss., Columbia University 2001; abstract), p. 14. See Antoine Compagnon: *The Five Paradoxes of Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Forms of Continuity in Space (1913) that appeared on the cover page of *MA* in 1918.[84] As Mark Antliff stresses, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* seemed to embody the futurist Marinetti's image of the revolutionary, "youthful, brimming with health, dynamic, and hyper masculine".[85]

At the same time, because of censorship reasons, until the defeat of the Central Powers became obvious in the summer of 1918, *MA* had generally avoided direct political stances. In late 1918, during the soon-to-be aborted transition to democracy of independent Hungary – when new forms and expressions were introduced and the focus was "shifted from the internal qualities from the autonomous work of art to actions, events and interventions"[86] – revolutionary socialism and anarcho-communism appeared together, sometimes amalgamated into each other on the pages of *MA*. In this period, avant-garde manifestations became visible in the actions that disrupted established high art. Opposing the artist of the new society with the current "bourgeois" republic and the academic tradition as well, was in basic conflict with the very idea of *avant-garde*.[87]

However, Kassák and his remaining movement still wanted to reconcile the collectivist ideal with the individualist ideal when, besides anarchism, communism appeared as an attractive ideology as well. This time the circle of *MA* as an aesthetic movement was fluctuating between becoming a part of practical politics and remaining a creative laboratory for avant-garde art. Collaborators praised the independently revolutionary potential of art, but most of them rejected submitting their art to the needs of political revolutionaries.[88] They did not want to create an ideological poetry or art that would correspond to the expectations of the freshly launched Hungarian Communist Party (first called Party of Communists in Hungary).

At the same time, by February 1919 the concept of *Activism* as a sort of socialist humanism modelled after contemporary German activism was chosen by Kassák as an explicit political aesthetics of *MA*. As he explained in a long essay published in his magazine in April 1919, this political aesthetics was closer to revolutionary socialism or even revolutionary communism than anarchism.[89] But how could it happen

[84] Umberto Boccioni, "Szobor" [Sculpture], *MA*, no. 5 (1918), p. 53. On Boccioni see Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics. Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909–1944* (New York, Oxford, Berghahn, 1996), p. 83.

[85] See Mark Antliff, *Sculptors Against the State: Anarchism and the Anglo-European Avant-Garde* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2021), p. 90.

[86] Van den Berg et al., ed., *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries, 1900–1925*, p. 12.

[87] See Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 84.

[88] See Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, p. 104. Referred to by David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, p. 159.

[89] Lajos Kassák, "Aktivizmus" (Felolvasás 1919. II. 20.) ["Activism". Lecture from February 20, 1919], *MA*, no. 4 (1919), pp. 46–51.

that the Hungarian avant-garde still showed at this time a fascination for totalitarian and anti-libertarian communism? We can answer this question in a general way: the avant-garde more often adheres to leftist ideologies and "the communist experiment exercised a particular fascination for the avant-garde mind".[90] As Renato Poggioli explains this sympathy with communism: "(...) avant-garde communism is the fruit of an eschatological state of mind, simultaneously messianic and apocalyptic" and "the force of these impulses and the attraction of that fascination are capable of producing a morbid condition of mystical ecstasy, which prevents the avant-garde artist from realizing that he would have neither a reason nor the chance to exist in a communist society. That mystical urge prevents self-criticism and self-knowledge."[91]

Nevertheless, on the pages of *MA* the subject of anarchism could appear more explicitly in theoretical writings and in poetry as well. In one of Kassák's poems written at the beginning of 1919, just before the communist-socialist takeover of the Hungarian government, a verse like "Destroy to build"[92] took direct inspiration from Bakunin's theory of "creative destruction" – similar to pre-revolutionary Russian futurists.[93] The "ambivalence of an unwittingly anarchistic mentality" as Poggioli says, can be seized in this verse: the destructive impulse appeared with "the opposite desire, by which that destruction serves future construction".[94] Also, *MA* published some theoretical writings by Sándor Barta, an expressionist poet who became Kassák's brother-in-law and fellow-writer extensively publishing on a utopian anarchist society based on the free union and mutual trust of "new men" and "new women".[95]

While in the Russia of the Bolsheviks "anarchism's strength as a leading international social movement" had already been reduced by 1918–1919,[96] in the Republic of Councils in Hungary (the Hungarian Soviet Republic) that existed for only a couple of months, from March 21 to August 1, 1919,[97] Budapest anarchists were tolerated to a certain degree under the joint rule of Social-Democrats and Communists, just as were other leftist initiatives as well. Their circle was not banned like political parties were,

[90] Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-garde in Art and Politics", p. 99.

[91] Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-garde in Art and Politics", p. 100.

[92] Lajos Kassák, Fiatal munkás [Young Worker], *MA*, no. 3 (1919), p. 40.

[93] Gourianova, "Gambling Anarchically," p. 79.

[94] Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 99.

[95] Sándor Barta, "A kultúrájában forradalmasított ember. Az aktivista csoport III. előadása" [Man revolutionized in his culture. Lecture III of the Activist Group], *MA*, 4/6, 1 June 1919, 110–114.

[96] Although initially supportive of the Bolsheviks, many anarchists opposed them after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, launching a "Third Revolution" against the government with the intention of restoring *soviet democracy*. But this attempted revolution was crushed by 1921, definitively ending with the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion and the defeat of the Black Army in Ukraine.

[97] On the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, see Bob Dent, *Painting the Town Red: Politics and the Arts During the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

as well as liberal and conservative intellectual circles, and they could even publish their periodical *Társadalmi forradalom* (The Social Revolution) that had run (with breaks) since 1907.[98] Although *MA*, that was receiving an important subvention from the proletarian regime, was opened to anarchism, there was no sharing of authors or publications with *Társadalmi Forradalom*.

As this early communist regime in Spring 1919 became increasingly rigid, this small leftist – however still tolerated – "subculture" became (self)muted as well. The rigidification of the communist regime affected *MA* as well. After an initial period of cooperation based on a shared hatred against the old regime (and not without its paradoxes[99]), Kassák and a couple of fellow writers, Sándor Barta and Mózes Kahána, felt compelled to publicly defend their liberty of self-expression in June 1919. They turned against the communist leadership for not willing to use artistic radicalism anymore and even more so out of concern about increasingly harsh censorship (like their Social-Democratic counterparts who also wanted to reduce censorship).[100] So, even without being members of the Budapest anarchist group, writers of *MA* were equally influenced by an anti-authoritarian sensibility and they did not want to sacrifice the personal expression that was so important for classical avant-garde art to the political aims of the communists.[101] Ultimately, the Hungarian proletarian dictatorship collapsed before the communists were able to have effectively revendicated a culturally avant-garde role – based on Lenin's political doctrine of "the party as vanguard". Later, Kassák relaunched *MA* while in exile in Vienna and this version oriented itself fully towards the avant-garde art of the epoch – namely constructivism – that was a manifestation of an interest in social utopianism that replaced any direct politization. But most of his fellow-writers, including Sándor Barta, were not satisfied with this artistic speculation (seen by them as a new form of "art for art's sake"), and left Kassák as they were drawn to communism – similarly to other European avant-garde artists participating in dada

[98] The subtitle was "a magyarországi forradalmi szocialisták lapja" [the Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of Hungary] and was edited by the circle around Károly Krausz (under the pseudonym István Kaszás) between 1907 and 1919 with a print run of 3000 to 5000 copies. For more on the anarchists' activities during the Hungarian Republic of Councils, see Martyn Everett, *War and Revolution: The Hungarian Anarchist Movement in World War I and the Budapest Commune (1919)* (Berkeley: The Kate Sharpley Library, 2006).

[99] See Márton Pacsika, "Purposeful player of a new instrument – Lajos Kassák and the Budapest *MA*" in *Art in Action*, ed. Eszter Balázs, Edit Sasvári, and Pál Merse Szeredi, pp. 71–87; Pál Merse Szeredi, 'A Mácastílus irodalmi diktátora Lukács György sznob uszályában' – Az Aktivisták a Tanácsköztársaságban' ['A literary dictator with a style à la Mácza backed by the snobbish György Lukács': Activists in the Hungarian Republic of Councils], *Enigma* 25, no. 94 (2018), pp. 126–144.

[100] This gesture prefigured what happened later, especially after World War II, when in the hostile post-war atmosphere it was felt that "avant-gardism might be a symbol of democracy in the 'free' world'" (Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 83).

[101] See Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 83.

or in the surrealist movements. In the eyes of the communists, Marxism-Leninism was regarded as the one true avant-garde ideology – nonetheless, early in the 1920s, *Proletkult*, promulgating the official line of Soviet-Russian cultural politics and having an influence on the ex-anarchist Barta and others, still had an aura of avant-gardism. Kassák, who neither joined the communist party nor the *Proletkult* initiatives, was tagged by the communists as a "decadent petit-bourgeois" in the 1920s. This characterization reflected the Soviet regime's reactionary stance towards the independent cultural avant-garde movement. During his Viennese emigration, as well as when he was back in Budapest, he launched in addition to *MA* a couple of short-lived, avant-garde journals. Only in the 1930s, when the influence of anarchism as a movement had already essentially disappeared, would he resume in Hungary a more visible politization that was much closer to the social-democratic ideal than anarchism in a political sense.[102] At this time he founded an independent socialist review entitled *Munka* (Work) (1928–1939) that couldn't anymore be called an avant-garde magazine.

Conclusion

The Hungarian avant-garde of the 1910s demonstrated that anarchism could be a culture in its own right, as traditional political avenues were deemed to be impossible route for its realization. Kassák's first two magazines, founded respectively in 1915 and 1916, became a testament to the diverse, non-hierarchical, transnational, and convention-defying nature of anarchism. By examining the interplay between anarchism and the avant-garde in Central Europe through the lens of Kassák's magazines, this paper sheds light on an underexplored aspect of the relationship between radical modern art and anarchism during this period. It highlights the cultural impact anarchism had in Hungary and its ability to challenge established artistic conventions. Kassák's magazines truly demonstrated that an "aesthetic, social and political cross-pollination took place between the avant-gardes and the anarchists".[103] Through this analysis, a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between anarchism and the avant-garde in Central Europe can be achieved. And while Kassák's place in general accounts of the aesthetic avant-garde is already widely recognised, his role in the European anarchist movement is less so. This paper has tried to fill this historiographical lacuna.

[102] On the avant-garde in the 1930s, see Egbert, "The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics", p. 82.

[103] See Carolin Kosuch, *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde: Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

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EARLY 1990s ANARCHISM IN SLOVAKIA

Between Punk Rebellion and Organized Protest*

Miroslav Michela

Abstract

The study offers insight into the development of anarchism in Slovakia during the early 1990s. The beginnings of the anarchist movement in Slovakia in the post-socialist period were based on a clear rejection of the previous undemocratic state-socialist regime and the search for their own evolutionary paths to achieve anarchist ideals. They made efforts to achieve this through self-organization and wider promotion, using non-violent tactics, gradually focusing on education and discussion. Emphasis was placed on the principles of autonomism, which proclaimed the possibility of achieving freedom in lifestyle without changing the way the whole society functions. The main assumption is that the history of the anarchist movement in Slovakia is intimately tied to the transfer of ideas and practices from the Czech Republic, and that it evolved in two environments that significantly shaped its nature. The first environment comprised the alternative music scene and subcultures,

* This study draws on research funded by APVV-20-0526 Political socialization in the territory of Slovakia during the years 1848–1993 and was realized at the Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava.

especially the punk and hardcore scene. The second one was the emerging non-profit sector, primarily environmental, animal rights, and human rights organizations. Rather than focusing on a revolutionary suppression of the influence of the state, these strategies were a search for one's own free space so as to realize the aforementioned ideals, which in some cases took the form of cooperation with or transition to the non-profit sector, as well as a significant emphasis on the principles of civic activism, which confirms the premise concerning the prevalence of civic anarchism in the Slovak environment.
Keywords
Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, Punk, Anarchism, Civic Anarchism, Non-Profit Organisations, 1980–1990s

The aim of this study is to offer a historical insight into the development of formal and informal collectives supporting the ideas of anarchism in Slovakia during the early 1990s. The following analysis is based primarily on the sources produced by the anarchists themselves. My assumption is that the history of the anarchist movement in Slovakia is intimately tied to the transfer of ideas and practices from the Czech Republic, and that it evolved in two environments that significantly shaped its nature. The first environment comprised the alternative music scene and subcultures, especially the punk and hardcore scene. The second one was the emerging non-profit sector, primarily environmental, animal rights, and human rights organizations. However, their origins were also largely associated with the members of the anarcho-punk scene. These two environments influenced the ways in which the Slovak anarchist movement manifested itself publicly in the first half of the 1990s. The term "anarcho-punk" gained currency in the music environment and became associated with the broader sense of political, ecological, and animal rights activism, having a strong appeal to achieve significant changes in contemporary society.

In the context of debates about defining anarchist ideology and practice, the article is inspired by the discussion around *temporary autonomous zones* defined by Hakim Bey and *social-oriented anarchism* and *lifestyle anarchism* defined by Murray Bookchin.[1] These terms refer to a broad array of organized activities built on anarchist ideals and driven by individual or communitarian preferences. In this regard, there is a significant emphasis on an evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach to the required change in the social order, or less emphasis on the class dimensions of anar-

[1] See Hakim Bey, "T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism", accessed July 1, 2023, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/hakim-bey-t-a-z-the-temporary-autonomous-zone-ontological-anarchy-poetic-terrorism; and Murray Bookchin, "Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism. An Unbridgeable Chasm", accessed July 1, 2023, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-social-anarchism-or-lifestyle-anarchism-an-unbridgeable-chasm.

chist theory. In accordance with my field of interest, I am following the argumentation of Matyáš Křížkovský on *civic anarchism*, which he describes as a form characteristic of the early post-socialist Central and East European context. Civic-defined anarchism was less communal and more directed at citizens as members of the state rather than the community, it was more about incremental efforts for society-wide change than about creating alternative islands of freedom. Rather than the realization of anarchist ideals within an anarchist, or at least anarchizing, community or subculture, it aimed at presenting anarchist ideals to the mainstream public and at promoting them in public institutions.[2]

Very little has been written on punk or anarchism in Slovakia in the 1990s.[3] By contrast, in recent years, one can observe a significant research interest in the politicization of the Czech punk subculture and development of new alternative scenes in general. The focus is primarily on historical developments and political and ideological changes that have subsequently transformed the subcultural movements, with frequent interrogations linked to activism and radicalisation, subcultural style, and hedonism.[4] Other important outcomes deal with the relations between subcultures, the state, and civil society.[5]

For the purpose of this study, I studied officially published and unofficial printed media and texts of punk bands. Czech and Slovak fanzines were the most useful source of information. Furthermore, I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews.

[2] Matyáš Křížkovský, "‚Nedej náckům žádnou šanci': třídní, komunitní a občanská strategie anarchistického antifašismu", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (forthcoming).

[3] For an exception, see Ondřej Daniel, "Places of Revolt: Geographical References in the Slovak Anarchist Press Around the Turn of the Millennium", *Forum Historiae* 14, no. 1 (2020), pp. 39–52. Several interviews with activists were published in various media outlets, see https://www.priestori.sk/juraj-hips-prezivat-slobodu-ducha-vo-svojom-vnutri/; https://www.kruhzivota.sk/matus-ritomsky-idealy-uz-nenosim-ako-bojovu-zastavu; https://www.priestori.sk/juraj-hips-vs-matus-ritomsky-hladanie-alternativ-alebo-bludenie-v-slepych-ulickach-1/; http://deathfistzine-rozhovory.blogspot.com/p/duro-lues-de-funes.html. All accessed August 17, 2023.

[4] See, for example, *Revolta stylem. Hudební subkultury mládeže v České republice*, ed. Marta Kolářová (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2012); Ondřej Císař and Martin Koubek, "Include 'em all?: Culture, Politics and a Local Hardcore/Punk Scene in the Czech Republic", *Poetics* 40, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1–21; Ondřej Daniel, *Násilím proti „novému biedermeieru": subkultury a většinová společnost pozdního státního socialismu a postsocialismu* (Příbram: Pistorius & Olšanská, 2016); Jan Charvát and Bob Kuřík, ed., *Mikrofon je naše bomba: politika a hudební subkultury mládeže v postsocialistickém Česku* (Praha: Togga, 2018). And, regarding the relation of punk and anarchism, see also Jim Donaghey, "The 'Punk Anarchisms' of Class War and CrimethInc", *Journal of Political Ideologies* 25, no. 2 (2020), pp. 113–138.

[5] See, for example, Arnošt Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989* (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2017); Vendula Prokůpková, "The Limits of Tolerance for Intolerance: Young Democracy and Skinhead Violence in Czechia in the 1990s", *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 10 (2021), pp. 1771–1796.

I started recording interviews back in 2017, as part of my research on fanzines.[6] For the purposes of this text, I recorded two semi-structured interviews and managed informal consultations with five informants about particular questions, by online communication tools. All quoted informants were significantly active in the period under scrutiny. Most of them published fanzines, or significantly contributed to some; they participated in the distribution of printed materials and in music production; they were actively involved in the organization of various events and campaigns. All analysed materials are kept in the Archives of Czech and Slovak Subcultures.[7]

Punk and Anarchy under State Socialism

Punk music appeared on stage in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1978 and 1979, partly as a result of the interest of music enthusiasts associated with the so-called Jazz Section in new Western rock, and partly in support of the Czech underground.[8] In the first half of the 1980s, official media in Czechoslovakia reacted to the growing popularity of punk and new wave with strict warnings about the possible bad influence of nihilistic and criminal behaviour, scaring the public with a purported new wave of fascism. Consequently, the security apparatus took various systematic measures to disperse and bully the punks.[9] Bullying and disgust towards the punk scene was also a frequent reaction on the part of ordinary citizens.

Unlike in Bohemia and Moravia, where punk bands and parties had been popping up all over the country since the early 1980s, in Slovakia it was mainly happened in Bratislava, where punk had a larger fan base; only in late 1980s did the situation begin to change in the other parts of Slovakia. Terms such as "anarchy" and "anarchism" appeared in the Slovak punk environment before 1989, to a considerable extent in connection with the legacy of the punk tradition as anti-system provocation. Already on their first demo recording (1982) the band Paradox come up with the song *Anarchia v Bratislave (Anarchy in Bratislava)*. Its post-apocalyptic lyrics were linking the words "anarchy" and "chaos": *"The streets of Bratislava are full of ammunition today, the pavements of Bratislava are full of panic today.* [...] *In the sewers, plans are made, entry only for those who take off their shoes, mustard gas is the hit of the day, yesterday it was dynamite."*[10]

[6] Later, starting in 2021, I started to do semi-structured interviews, especially with Czech and Slovak punks and people who wrote about punk or organised punk events in the period 1988 – 1995. In total, I have conducted about a hundred semi-structured interviews.

[7] More information at ziny.info. Accessed April 12, 2023.

[8] For more details, see Filip Fuchs, *Kytary a řev aneb co bylo za zdí: punk rock a hardcore v Československu před rokem 1989* (Brno: Papagájův Hlasatel, 2002); Petr "Hraboš" Hrabalík, *Kristova léta českého punku: text k výstavě Popmusea* (Praha: Popmuseum, 2012).

[9] Miroslav Vaněk, *Byl to jenom rock'n'roll?: hudební alternativa v komunistickém Československu 1956–1989* (Praha: Academia, 2010).

[10] http://zonaa.sk/TEXTY/PARADOX/anarchiavba.html. Accessed April 12, 2023.

Since its inception in 1984, the most famous Slovak punk band Zóna A, which arose from Paradox, included an "A", often representing "anarchy"/"anarchism" for the punk environment. However, their name originated in the original "Anti-Zóna" and the band never espoused anarchism. It had a major impact on the development of punk in Slovakia. This was also reflected in the strong reception of the melodic style of Punk 77, which became characteristic especially of the Bratislava scene. These bands sang mainly about different firsthand experiences – antimilitarist, depressing, often using irony and metaphors to criticize the socialist regime and contemporary society.

Marcel, later a guitarist of the influential band Davová psychóza (formed in 1987), mentions that he first encountered the terms "anarchy" and "anarchism" in the lyrics of the songs and in the names of the bands he was following. He and his friends did not understand the lyrics very much at the time; accessible translations were rare. He perceived the term "anarchy" as a "part of the resistance to communism and to the regime as such, against the establishment; we could imagine a state of some unorganized governmental structure".[11] In a similar vein, in 1987, the young band Barbus sang in *Anarchia tu a dnes* (Anarchy here and now): "I am not a fascist, I have never gained anything, I am not for politics, I only believe in anarchy. I want anarchy, here and now, anarchy [...] There will be time when there is no money, when machines in factories are shut down forever."[12] Despite the fact that people in Bratislava listened to bands such as Dead Kennedys, Conflict, and Crass in the 1980s, there were no stronger ideological influences on their lyrics at that time. Czechoslovak punk production emphasized depression and self-destruction, rather than a way to self-liberation and social self-realization.[13] Nonetheless, the ideological foundations of the emerging new punk activism had appeared already before the fall of the state-socialist regime in November 1989 – especially in the field of antimilitarism, anti-nationalism, and anti-racism, as well as ecology and animal rights – for example, in Czech fanzines such as *Oslí uši* (Donkey's Ears) and *Sračka* (Crap), popular also in Slovakia.

Do-It-Yourself Activism as a Response to Commodification of the Subcultures

The collapse of state socialism meant the abolition of censorship and central planning. It paved way for a gradual transformation of the country into a liberal democracy, with a market-oriented economic system. The popularity of domestic pop icons declined significantly among young people in the post-revolutionary period.[14] Previously mar-

[11] Archiv českých a slovenských subkultur (AČSS). Interview with Marcel, January 26, 2023.

[12] https://www.projektpunk.cz/online/3072-Anarchia-tu-a-dnes. Accessed April 12, 2023.

[13] For more about punk lyrics before 1989, see Radim Kopáč, *Všechno je špatně, zpátky na stromy! Český punk a hardcore v textech 1979–1989* (Praha: Divočina, 2022), p. 35–45.

[14] Tomáš Kavka, "Czechoslovak Pop Music in Young People's Lifestyle Magazines in the 'Anti-Decade', 1985–1995", *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations* 24, no. 1 (2020), pp. 29–43; Ken Roberts, "1989: So Hard to Remember and So Easy to Forget", in *1989 – Young*

ginalized performers from the folk, underground, and alternative scenes appeared on the "big stages" and in mainstream media. Their anti-communist attitudes, the cultural capital of punk built on the rejection of the past regime, and the perceptions of their constant persecution led to their engagement in concerts organized by the democratic opposition. Starting in 1990, this cultural regime change was facilitated by the mass production and distribution of music recordings of punk bands.[15] This boom lasted for about two years. Some samizdats and fanzines morphed into mainstream periodicals, promoting interest in fringe genres and topics. Similarly, popular magazines like *Rock & Pop* or *Reflex* intensively communicated with alternative culture and shaped the demand. In general, the mainstream media played a significant role in the mass presentation of punk music – even the anarchist movement of the early 1990s – as they were conveying specific aesthetic and ideological impulses. Unfortunately, the by-product of that period's understanding of pluralism of opinions was also a tolerance of increasingly popular nationalist and racist skinheads.[16] The first post-revolutionary long-playing record, *Rebelie – Punk'n 'Oi!,* a compilation released on the label Monitor in April 1990, was a remarkable success. It sold more than 100,000 copies and became the initiating medium of a new generation of punks as well as racist skinheads.

Like labels in Czech Republic, Slovak OPUS, having long dominated the Slovak market with popular music, used the opportunity to also earn some money from punk. The label had already conducted unsuccessful negotiations with Zóna A before the fall of the communist regime and, in 1990, they released their LP *Potopa* (The Deluge). A year later, the label produced two more successful punk albums: *Antropofóbia* by Davová psychóza and *Pakáreň* by Slobodná Európa. Zóna A rose to stardom in the early 1990s; even a youth programme was named after them, the Slovak Television's Zóna D (D for "deti", children). It was hosted by the then-young actor Rastislav Rogel, who was at the same time a singer in the racist skinhead band Krátky Proces [Short Process]. However, these iconic bands had lost their popularity within the emerging anarcho-punk scene due to their excessive evolution towards mainstream; in the case of Zóna A, their close ties to some neo-Nazi figures played a part.

Fundamental critiques of powerful Western corporations and exploitation, as well as the fight against nationalism and racism were the fundamental features of the emerging anarcho-punk movement in Czechoslovakia. At the same time, this environment, built on the Do It Yourself (DIY) principle, sought to create its own cultural and political

People and Social Change After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, ed. Carmen Leccardi, Carles Feixa, Siyka Kovacheva, Herwig Reiter, and Tatjana Sekulić (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2012), pp. 15–28.

[15] Ondřej Štěpánek, "Transformace československého hudebního průmyslu na počátku 90. let 20. století", *Acta Musei Nationalis Pragae – Historia* 74, no. 3–4 (2020), pp. 56–67.

[16] Ondřej Daniel, "Kánon a alibi: anticiganismus postsocialistických subkultur", *Slovo a smysl* 10, no. 20 (2013), pp. 260–271.

alternative, represented for example by the compilation published by Malárie Records label in 1991 titled "Fuck Off, Major Labels!!!"[17] In practice, besides the DIY releases and organisation of various events, this also meant establishing their own scene, working together in a similarly oriented international network, and participating in various protest activities.

Beside the critique of commercialization which started quite soon after the 1989 political change, criticism directed at new political elites appeared also in the Slovak punk environment, just like in the Czech and Moravian environments. It was directed against the conservative Catholic and nationalist forces and, after 1993, mainly against the authoritarian government of Vladimír Mečiar.[18] Hoten Toten, punk rockers from Žilina, employed this approach in their song *Nežná revolúcia (*Velvet Revolution*)* (1990) with the lyrics "Our life has changed only a little, again everyone only wants to be on the gravy train".[19] They proclaimed the need for activism in punk and increasingly set themselves against some pre-revolution punk bands. In this regard, the Slovak hardcore band Lues de Funes' was also very positively received in the anarchist environment in 1991.[20] The members of this band were not punks, but students with an intellectual interest in alternative culture. In 1991, they also participated in the May Day anarchist demonstration in Prague.

The already well-established, Bratislava-based band Davová psychóza also went in this direction. Rather than having their second album released by the commercial OPUS, with whom they had signed a disadvantageous contract in the past, they released a record in 1992 with a significantly harsher sound; the lyrics, too, were more politically loaded. It raised various environmental and social issues, such as whale killing, human rights, anti-capitalism and anti-consumerism, and antifascism. Not identifying themselves as anarchists, the band nonetheless openly sympathized with the emerging anarchist movement.[21] Their songs and concerts were very popular among Czech and Slovak anarcho-punk listeners.

A shift also appeared in fanzine pages during the early 1990s. They gradually stopped writing about the recordings and concerts of the bands playing in the "commercial tier". Criticizing their apolitical nature and their lack of interest in public affairs, they labelled this environment "alco-punk". For example, in zines such as Bratislava's *Pavu-*

[17] See also "Hard Core, prachy a revoluce – polemika", *A-kontra* 1, no. 2 (1991), p. 10, and Ondřej Císař and Martin Koubek, "Include 'em all?: Culture, Politics and a Local Hardcore/Punk Scene in the Czech Republic".

[18] About so called Mečiarism, see also Stevo Đurašković, *The Politics of History in Croatia and Slovakia in the 1990s* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2016).

[19] "Hoten Toten – Nežná revolúcia", accessed April 15, 2023, https://youtu.be/HKqvKMe40ug.

[20] *A-kontra* 1, no. 5 (1991), p. 8.

[21] "Od komerce zpátky k alternativě?: nová tvár Davovej psychózy – rozhovor s kapelou", *A-kontra* 2, no. 6 (1992), p. 8.

čina (1991), Šamorín's *Delirium Tremens*, Košice's *R.S.S.*, or Nitra's *Podzemák*, one can observe in 1992 a rapid shift of focus from the presentation of music and subculture towards an activist discourse, opening new topics and incitements to action.

Anarchism in Slovakia in the Early 1990s

As Bob Kuřík pointed out, referring to the example of the Prague anarchist scene, in that long year of 1989 it was anarchy, and not anarchism, that much more represented an ethical commitment to cultivate oneself and others, an approach to life, mutual self-defence and liberation, a community of friends, the lively creativity of public and direct action, as well as creativity in the cultural underground, but also the emerging material-discursive infrastructure supporting the movement. Most activists were intellectuals in their own, specific ways, not professional intellectuals. However, towards the end of 1991, but especially during 1992, anti-ideological tendencies within the emerging anarchist movement began to be problematised. This went hand in hand with the critique of ephemeral action and with an emphasis on self-education in the theory and history of the anarchist movement in the anarchist press (see especially the magazines *A-kontra* and *Autonomie*). After 1992, anarchy without anarchism had been gradually diluted in Prague by anarchism, a more coherent ideology with a long history and its own philosophy, but also representing a concept, a plan, a sophisticated strategy.[22] These tendencies also resonated in Slovakia.

In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Slovak punk environment was greatly inspired by the band Zóna A. For them, the end of state-communism was crucial, and they did not feel the need for further political engagement. The scene was strongly anti-communist, and the gradual profiling of the Czech anarchist movement towards the far left was often disapproved of by the older generation.[23] One of the Lues de Funes' members argued: *"We also had our 'internal slogans' like SZAM (Slovak Youth Anarchist Union) as a 'virtual youth anarchist organisation' was great fun and we 'supported' it, like 'we are members of SZAM' or that it co-organizes our concerts.* [...] *anarchism as a 'self-organization' fitted right in. Our drummer's mom stitched a beautiful anarchist flag, and we carried it to concerts* [...] *But then we saw in A-kontra, and especially in Prague, that these people are the 'Marxist left'. We were anti-communists, excited that the communists were defeated in November 1989, and these anarchists were suddenly bringing them back. Since then, we've been hanging the anarchist flag upside down at concerts.* [...] *We made*

[22] Bob Kuřík, "'Nevěřte nikomu, ani nám!' Pražské znovuobjevování", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (forthcoming).

[23] See also Ondřej Daniel, "State Liberation or State Abolition? Czech Punk between Anti-Communism and Anarchism", in *Smash The System! Punk Anarchism as a Culture of Resistance*, ed. Jim Donaghey, Will Boisseau, and Caroline Kaltefleiter (Bristol: Active Distribution, 2022), pp. 169–188.

the upturned A in a circle a symbol associated with LDF, just like the inverted cross is a symbol of black metal."[24]

From 1989, fanzines such as *Sračka*, *Šot*, or later *Malárie*, *Brněnská Vrtule* – as well as the first anarchist-oriented publications such as *OKO*, the officially published *Vokno*, *Voknoviny, Kontra*, or the environmental *Poslední generace* (Last Generation) – played a significant role in the flow of information. In addition to the interest in music, art, and subcultural topics, the critique of the political establishment and the moral condemnation of capitalism and exploitation resonated the most. Anti-capitalist rhetoric specifically targeted the large multinational corporations, not the capitalist system as such. In the sense of striving for a just society, anarchism was seen as synonymous with solidarity with the oppressed, envisaging a society based on responsible and free individuals, propelling the driving force for action against the distortions of consumerism.[25] Such a thematic composition remained characteristic of the Slovak anarcho-punk zines after 1992, when the number of new zines began to grow significantly.

However, *A-kontra*, a magazine that has been published in Prague since the spring of 1991, had a major influence on the formation of the anarcho-punk movement in Slovakia. This finding emerges from the memories of all my informants, who emphasized the ideological importance of this periodical for their work. The (initially bi-weekly) periodicity and the good accessibility of this magazine, either in newspaper stands or through local distributors or subscription, was a key factor in creating networks and disseminating information all over the country. Information about upcoming events made it possible to plan trips, and thereby expand personal networks, and to obtain information that was then usually further disseminated by mail.

A-kontra was only covering events in Slovakia on a rather sporadic basis. That indicates the state of the local movement – it became more visible only after 1992. A few anarchism-related activities had appeared before, for example, in Stará Turá, Hnutie proti štátnemu teroru (Movement against State Terror) organized a protest in 1991 that included a blockade of the entrance of the local municipal building, demanding the clearing of a chemical landfill located in the immediate vicinity of a field.[26] On October 8–10, 1991, two anarchist and antimilitarist demonstrations were held in Bratislava. About a hundred people attended the first one. There was also a confrontation with a similarly large group of Nazi-skinheads. It included a march through the city to the barracks where conscription was taking place, and to the Supreme Court building. There was also a police crackdown on the marchers.[27] In December of the same year, the anarchists organised a march on Human Rights Day. With only about 30 people

[24] AČSS. Personal communication with Juraj, December 29, 2022.

[25] "Dopisy", Jana (Prešov), *A-kontra* 1, no. 7 (1991), p. 9.

[26] "Zablokovanie Mestského úradu v Starej Turej", *A-kontra* 1, no. 7 (1991), p. 12.

[27] "Demonstrace v Bratislavě", *A-kontra* 1, no. 17 (1991), p. 3.

showing up, the event was not seen as a success.[28] A concert against fascism, racism, and communism was held in Bratislava on March 14, 1992, organised by the Human Movement and other non-profit organisations such as the Charter 77 Foundation, to protest the nearby celebrations of the anniversary of the establishment of the fascist Slovak state, with these celebrants coming over and provoking the audience of the concert. While not organised by anarchists, this event was a space for the mobilization of a civil society. Another larger event took place in Prievidza on May 1 and 2, 1992, bringing together music and activism. The event, titled "Za život" (For life), proclaimed itself to be a tribute to nature, against human egoism, and against violence done to animals; some popular punk and hardcore bands played at it.[29]

First Collectives and Anarcho-Punk-Activism

In 1992, the first active groups adhering to the ideas of anarchism were established in Slovakia. Green anarchism, which developed in Bratislava, also inspired by the domestic environmental movement, was based on the idea of combining anarchism with the protection of nature and a return to a more natural and greener way of life.[30] Unlike traditional environmental activists or the emerging NGOs, there was a strong urge for direct action. It was represented by the fanzine of *10,000 More Trees*, the first issue of which was published in September 1992. The idea of green anarchism was inspired from abroad, especially by the *Green Anarchist* magazine and the Earth First! radical environmental movement.

In 1992, the Bratislava-based Skupina radikálneho protifašistického odboja (S.R.P.O., Radical Anti-Fascist Resistance Group) was created in response to widespread physical attacks by Nazi and racist skinheads in the Slovak capital and, referring to World War II anti-fascist traditions, focused on combating fascism.[31] Its members were associated with the anarcho-punk band You Think Bad. In February 1994, they published their own fanzine called *Voľnosť* (Freedom).

Bunky individuálneho odporu (B.I.O.; Individual Resistance Cells) was another active platform in Bratislava in 1992–1994, which occasionally contributed to *A-kontra*. They published a fanzine called *Veritas* that including translations of theoretical texts on anarchism. They published two pamphlets: *Anarchizmus a národná otázka (Anarchism and the National Question)* (1992) and *Kresťanstvo – Áno či nie? (Christianity – Yes or No?)* (1993), but I wasn't able to get a hold of them. They intended to build a network of individualistic activists who, for various reasons, were not interested in engaging in mass action.[32]

[28] "10. december Deň ľudských práv", Bratislava, *A-kontra* 2, no. 1 (1992), p. 8.

[29] "Koncert za život", *Podzemák* 1, no. 3 (1992), pp. 5–6; *A-kontra* 2, no. 6 (1992), p. 8.

[30] "Ži a nechaj žiť!", *A-kontra* 2, no. 1 (1992), pp. 8–9.

[31] "Skupina radikálního protifašistického odboja", *Shit Core* 1, no. 1 (1992), p. 9.

[32] "Zdar", *Veritas* 1, no. 2 (August 1993), p. 2.

In terms of information dissemination, the Artfórum bookstore played a significant role in Bratislava as a point of distribution of anarchist literature and fanzines. Another important stimulus was the launch of Greenpeace's activities in Czechoslovakia in March 1992. In Slovakia, they immediately began to engage, for example, in a campaign to stop the operation of the nuclear power plant in Jaslovské Bohunice, and against the completion of the large Danube dam at Gabčíkovo, already targeted by the environmental movement before 1989. In 1991, Czechoslovak Anarchist Association expressed solidarity with the demonstrators as well.[33]

At the beginning of 1992, a group of Podjavorinské autonómne skupiny (P.A.S., Podjavorina Autonomous Groups) was formed, including activists from Nové Mesto nad Váhom and Stará Turá, that developed broader contacts abroad. They initiated efforts to coordinate anarchist activities in Slovakia and started a supplement to *A-kontra* that would primarily cover the situation in Slovakia.[34] Nové Mesto nad Váhom has been a place of regular punk events since the early 1990s.

On June 29, 1992, a benefit concert "For A-kontra" was organised in Stará Turá, announced as a meeting of Slovak anarchists, featuring many Slovak hardcore bands and visitors from various parts of the country. Kritická situace came from Prague, which at that time was the most influential political hardcore band in the country, and it was possible to buy back issues of *A-kontra* at a discount price. A discussion on the current problems and divisions in the Prague anarchist scene, preceding this event, was planned.[35] The editor-in-chief of *A-kontra,* Jakub Polák, attended the benefit concert, unlike his opponents from the Anarchist Federation.[36] P.A.S., as well as other Slovak activists, maintained contacts with a broad range of Czech anarchist groups. At the time, there were no fundamental conflicts inspired by ideological or personal hostility in Slovakia such as those in Bohemia and Moravia. The main disparities concerned the issues of pacifism and radicalism, but additionally contemporaneous discussions in Czech Republic sparked intellectual internal debates about the nature of the anarchist movement in Slovakia, too.

The P.A.S. created a fanzine titled *Anarchistická solidarita*, with its first issue published in the first half of 1993. With its design and content, it appeared more like a classic punk fanzine rather than an anarchist magazine. The first issue also contained

[33] "Stop Gabčíkovo! Protestujeme proti postupu státných orgánů. Solidaritu s demonstranty!", *A-kontra* 1, no. 10–11 (1991), p. 23.

[34] "K situaci na Slovensku", *A-kontra* 2, no. 18–19 (1992), pp. 3–4.

[35] The *A-kontra* office was attacked by a group of Prague anarchists. The sabotage of *A-kontra,* due the conflict arising from the fact that Polák allowed political agitation in favour of the Communist Party of Czechia and Moravia (KSČM), had been a topic of discussion for quite some time already.

[36] "Stará Turá", *Podzemák* 1, no. 3 (1992), p. 17; for A-kontra, *Anarchistická solidarita* 1, no. 1 (1993), pp. 8–9; "Slováci na podporu Čechů, bojová solidarita", *A-kontra* 2, no. 10–13 (1992), p. 4; "K pražskému i nášmu problem", *A-kontra* 2, no. 16–17 (1992), p. 12.

an article titled "Anarchia nie je synonymom chaosu!" (Anarchy is not synonymous with chaos!), which is probably the first manifesto of Slovak anarchists, and in which – as is stated – the philosophical foundations of anarchist attitudes are derived from individualism, voluntarism, and nihilism. Let me quote the key points:

> Anarchists fight against a hierarchical society. By eliminating the role of the state (police-bureaucratic government), they want to create a society without exploitation of any kind. In such a society, the domination of man over man, but also over nature, would be abolished. Anarchists want to create a community based on the foundations of DIRECT DEMOCRACY (not parliamentary), SELF-GOVERNMENT, and ECOLOGY. The driving force of society would be mutual help and solidarity. By abolishing the institution of the state, space would be created for the emergence of autonomous worker cells and agricultural municipalities, which would negate the principles of mass production (only as much as people really need would be produced). This would achieve harmony with nature. Private ownership would be abolished, which would be replaced by collective and non-state ownership [...] Anarchism fights fascism, racism, nationalism, and all forms of discrimination. Anarchists proclaim absolute freedom for all ethnic, cultural and sexual minorities (see discrimination against gay people in society) and are against sexism [...] they do not support discrimination against people or animals.[37]

Therefore, it neither concerned class-defined anarchist positions, nor an effort for a radical revolutionary change in society. Much more often, it was an appeal related to values built on autonomist foundations, emphasizing individual responsibility, which largely concerned only the participants and the scene.

In Košice, a punk fanzine *Reálny slobodný svet* (Real Free World) was published in 1990–1991. It drew attention to topics such as animal rights. Regular punk-hardcore concerts were organized in the local Atrium club by Laco, the publisher of *Mentally Parasites Journal* and *Stage Diving Hardcore Journal,* who was also the drummer in the popular grind-hardcore band Mentally Parasites. He also ran a distribution network of cassettes and magazines and published various activist messages in his primarily music-oriented journals (animal rights, vegetarianism, environment, appeals against corporations, conscientious objection, and so on). At the same time, local punks of the era were already travelling to concerts all over the republic and were interested in anarchism.[38] In 1993, an anarcho-punk band Nonconformist assembled and became extremely popular in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic.

[37] "Anarchia nie je synonymom chaosu!", *Anarchistická solidarita* 1, no. 1 (1993), p. 10.

[38] AČSS. Interview with Jozef, April 3, 2022.

On March 28, 1992, a demonstration against compulsory conscription was held in Košice, followed by a concert by Hoten Toten and Hustav Gusak at Atriumclub.[39] On August 10, 1992, the Sloboda zvierat (Animal Freedom) was founded as the Basic Organization of the Slovak Union for Nature and Landscape Protection in Košice. They defined themselves as a "non-governmental, non-political, non-profit, non-religious, voluntary" organization to protect the rights of animals and to fight for their freedom. The aim was to introduce animal rights into legislation. Their activities, ranging from promotional activities to direct actions, were based predominantly on volunteers.[40] Initially, they published the *Civilization* fanzine that included articles which were antimilitarist and critical of the arms industry (also in Slovakia), spoke in support of feminism and against sexism (including discussions about the pro-life agenda). They also criticized abortion and promiscuity. In the context of the protection of life, they emphasized that people and animals are equal in suffering and presented the activities of the emerging "Animal Freedom" organization.[41] Since 1993, a semi-professional magazine *Diego* and later fully professional *PreCit* were published, focusing specifically on animal rights and the organization's activities.

The main event took place when, on September 25 and 26, 1992, Sloboda zvierat organized a Concert against Violence on All That Lives on This Planet. Eighty-three bands from all over Czechoslovakia performed, and the event also included various screenings and discussions. The leitmotif was the juxtaposition of animal and human rights. This inspired a significant increase in interest in the topic, as well as an increase in the number of activists from all over the country. Activities related to the freedom of animals began to appear across Slovakia. Initially, there was a considerable link between them and the anarcho-punk movement. In addition, the animal rights movement was professionalized, benefitting from the transfer of experience from other countries, for example, from the Austrian organization called Vier Pfoten (Four Paws). The coordination skills and a broader impact of Sloboda zvierat became apparent when, in December 1992, in cooperation with the Czech Animal S.O.S., they launched a campaign against fur traders throughout Czechoslovakia.

In Šamorín, where the *Delirium Tremens* fanzine had been published and *Tlkot srdca* (*Heartbeat)* would start coming out in 1993, the Zá.S.A.H. (meaning a "hit" or a "strike"; the Western Slovak Anarchist Crowd) was established in the summer of 1993. Other groups or active persons were in various towns that included Bardejov, Modra, Nitra, Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Považská Bystrica, Sobrance, Trenčín, Topoľčany, and Žilina. And they often published their own alternative and punk fanzines that pro-

[39] *A-kontra* 2, no. 5 (1992), p. 5.

[40] "Sloboda zvierat", *A-kontra* 2, no. 20–21 (1992), p. 20.

[41] See also, "Ochrana života", *Civilizácia* 1, no. 1 (1992), pp. 4–5. See additionally "Právo na život", *Civilizácia* 1, no. 1 (1992), pp. 15–16.

moted the ideas of anarchism: *Podzemák* (Undergrounder) was published in Nitra, *Vryť* and *Kľovatina* that later merged, or *Zhluk* (Cluster), were published in Považská Bystrica, *Propaganda* in Sobrance, *Vlastný názor* (Own Opinion) in Svidník, *Protest* in Nové Mesto nad Váhom, and so on.

The First Attempt to Build a Nationwide Platform

The anarchists in both of the future republics did not welcome the splitting up of Czechoslovakia, and they specifically pointed out that it was not what people wanted, criticizing the demagogic nature and the rise of nationalism.[42] Information about an effort to create an umbrella platform for anarchists in Slovakia, which would help in coordinating activities and sharing information, appeared in 1992.[43] Networking activities multiplied in 1992–1993, usually through concerts, happenings, meetings, and protests, or through the distribution of recordings and literature. Petitions were circulating, leaflets issued, activist posters put up, materials distributed. Various political pamphlets were already in distribution. In terms of ideology, it concerned an open and heterogeneous group of people, growing up primarily in the punk and hardcore environment and supporting the alternative scene, the underground, with a strong focus on anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anti-racism, environmental topics, compulsory military service, and the protection of human and animal rights.

Anarchism was presented as an element of this alternative: as a free-thinking, egalitarian, socially active approach associated with a critique of contemporary society. Thus, the anarchists set themselves against the so-called alco-punks, the non-political punks, interested in music and hedonism, which promoted subculture in a nihilist way (under slogans like *No Future! No Respect to anyone and anything…*) and the perception of anarchy as chaos. Their activism was based on ideas of the abolition of authority, institutions, and hierarchies mixed in with the humanitarian-liberal foundations being presented to the public, like the protection of human and animal rights, emphasis on liberty and open discussion, individual freedom and, not least, faith in building the new democratic society. At that time, the agenda and even personnel coverage of non-profit organizations often overlapped with the activities of anarcho-punks and anarchists, and they provided support for each other. Such "civic anarchism", to a considerable extent, drew from the creation of anarcho-punk bands, as well as the anarchist movement in other countries, and also from the tradition of the Central European anti-communist cultural opposition. For instance, young Bratislava activists received support for their activities from the Charter 77 Foundation and collaborated with the Human Movement, both dedicated to human right issues.

[42] "Prohlášení Č.A.S. – Nechceme žádné nové Hranice", *A-kontra* 2, no. 18–19 (1992), p. 2; "Svetlá a šťastná budúcnosť nacionalistického Slovenska…?" *A-kontra* 3, no. 2–3 (1993), p. 11.

[43] "K situaci na Slovensku", *A-kontra* 2, no. 18–19 (1992), pp. 3–4.

The founding meeting of the Anarchist Federation of Slovakia (A.F.S.) was held in the town of Myjava in the H-RANA club, on Saturday evening, January 29th, 1994. The participants were informed about the places where active anarchist collectives were operating. The rise of European neo-fascism was the key issue being addressed. In this context they agreed to conduct three fundamental activities: the reproduction and dissemination of their own statement on pro-fascist and pro-Nazi tendencies in Europe; activities for monitoring fascist groups in individual regions; and on financial support for the Ladronka squat in Prague. In addition, they addressed the issue of the protest against the organization of the Winter Olympic Games in Poprad in 2002.[44] In this period, the A.F.S. had four contact centres: Civilizácia (Košice), P.A.S. (Stará Turá), Zá.S.A.H. (Šamorín), and Anarchist Association (Bratislava).

The second meeting of the A.F.S. was held in the spring (March/April) of 1994 in Bratislava's U-club. It was attended by representatives from Modra, Dunajská Streda and Šamorín, P.A.S., S.R.P.O., and the Anarchist Association. Topics such as the monitoring of the neo-Nazi movement, the 2002 Olympic Games planned in the Tatra Mountains and the scheduled May Day demonstration were discussed. The participants agreed to expand contacts with environmental organizations. In this period, anarchist activities in Slovakia were focused mainly on the organization of concerts (antifascist, antimilitary, benefit), campaigns, money collections, and petitions (to support the conscientious objector Laco Adzima, against efforts to hold the Olympics in the High Tatras, the monitoring of fascists, support for the Ladronka squat in Prague) and smaller demonstrations organized by local groups. They organized several trips to the Czech Republic – to demonstrate against the Velká pardubická steeple chase and the arms fair in Brno, and to attend the third international meeting of anarcho-syndicalists in Prague (July 1994). At the same time, they cooperated with the animal rights movement (Sloboda zvierat) and environmental movements (demonstrations against the Mochovce nuclear power plant).[45] During this period, anarcho-syndicalists also began organizing themselves in Slovakia and the Anarchosyndikalistická propagačná bunka (Anarcho-syndicalist Publicity Cell) was established in Stará Turá in 1994.[46]

The third meeting of the A.F.S. was held on October 22, 1994, in Stará Turá. In addition to the local P.A.S. organizers, it was attended by activists from Bratislava, Nitra, Sobrance, and Modra. After a discussion, however, the participants agreed that the activity of A.F.S. will formally be cancelled as too time-consuming. According to the recollections of a participant who was present at two such gatherings, "the meeting was so awkward and more or less it ended up with everybody having fun. Rather than

[44] *Shytcore*, no. 2, p. 14; *Veritas* 2, no. 6 (1994), pp. 13–14.

[45] "Anarchistická federácia, info servis", *A-kontra* 4, no. 11–13 (1994), p. 21.

[46] *Hlas Přímé Akce* 1, no. 4 (1994).

a strictly political project, it was more of a youthful idealistic affair."[47] Another activist, Juraj, argues in a similar vein: "people around music understood anarchism as some kind of a 'guide to individual freedom', but as soon as it was connected with some 'organizations', it actually refuted that freedom."[48] Although there had been a formal cessation of activity, the aforementioned platforms continued to operate and cooperate, even if without a common institutional background.

A prominent space that reinforced the Slovak anarchist movement was a squat in Košice called Zelený dvor (Green Yard) that was active from July 7, 1994, to January 1996. Squatting had a great response in Slovakia starting from early 1990s, with major inspiration coming from the Czech Republic, primarily through contacts with activists from Prague and Brno. For the people who founded Zelený dvor, the Prague squat Ladronka, with whom they were also connected by personal ties, was an important inspiration. The squat was on the outskirts of the city and the squatters tried to get it legalized as an ecological and cultural centre.[49] It became a legendary place in Slovakia, in support of which people gathered from all over the country and from abroad. Benefit concerts and festivals were organized there, as the squat was a regular target of attacks by neo-Nazi skinheads. It was even burned down twice, along with an anarchist library and materials to be distributed. During this period, there were several unsuccessful attempts to create additional squats in Slovakia (Trenčín, Čadca, Žilina, Malacky).

From Anarchist Revolt to Strengthening Civil Society

The Anarchist Association (A.A.), based in Bratislava, was officially established on February 1, 1994. It was another platform that strove for a wider, nation-wide remit. It revolved around the activities of young people, secondary school students, who did not belong to the core of the punk scene, although they were oscillating around it. They were involved in the issues of the environment and human rights, but also in the non-profit sector, and they sympathized with the ideas of anarchism (reading Czech anarchist magazines and the writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin available at the University Library in Bratislava). As one of them, Juraj, remembers: "I was convinced that a change in the social and political order could be beneficial. I liked the idea of small self-subsistent autonomous communes that cooperate with each other and can be a solution to various problems, both social and environmental."[50]

Juraj's initial experience with Greenpeace had a major influence on his activities, which was also greatly reflected in the form of the organization of protest actions by A.A.

[47] AČSS. Personal communication with Rado, February 4, 2023.

[48] AČSS. Personal communication with Juraj, March 8, 2023.

[49] Vlastimil Růžička, *Squaty a jejich revoluční tendence* (Praha: Triton, 2007), pp. 201–202; AČSS. Personal communication with Tibor, March 2, 2023.

[50] AČSS. Interview with Juraj II., January 23, 2023.

A lawyer was consulted in advance regarding the events and planned activities, and the activists were always given phone numbers to contact should any problems occur. They prepared press releases and discussions and worked to raise awareness of the issues. Their activities often attracted the attention of mainstream media, or they themselves had contacts with mainstream journalists interested in these topics.[51] Most of the activities of A.A. were planned in the basement of the building at Staromestská No. 6, where the Charter 77 Foundation and the Human Movement had their offices at that time. The premise also included storage for materials, magazines, books, leaflets, and the like. The place functioned as a small community hub.

The activists managed to organize the first major anarchist demonstration in Bratislava since 1991, on May 1, 1994, with about 200 to 300 participants. As a part of the programme, the A.F.S. statement was read. Anarchist participants started a non-violent march through the city centre, carrying banners and chanting antifascist slogans. There were also some conflicts with the police and with neo-Nazis trying to disrupt the event. This manifestation obtained quite a positive response in the mainstream media.[52]

A demonstration against the International Defense Equipment Exhibition (IDEE), which took place at the exhibition centre in Trenčín on October 5, 1994, was an important action of the association and which was organized under slogans of antimilitarism and pacifism in cooperation with the Human Movement and the movement called Trenčín, mesto smrti (Trenčín, City of Death). Gatherings were organised also in cooperation also with various other similarly oriented organisations like Deti Zeme (Children of the Earth), Greenpeace, John Lennon's Peace Movement, P.A.S., and so on. About 120 people gathered at the demonstration, with banners, flags, and leaflets. They prepared an exhibition about the war in Yugoslavia, as well as a happening where people would "die-in", covered with a white sheet splashed with red paint (symbolizing the blood of the victims of the war), blocking the entrance to the exhibition area. Some concerts were also organized during the two days of protests.

Another important outcome of the A.A. activities was the *Revolta* magazine, published in October 1994. Unlike the above-mentioned zines, it was a professionally looking magazine printed in 1000 copies. This magazine was officially registered and thus legally distributable. When it was created, there was a clear intention to give it an aesthetically more accomplished design than other punk zines had, with the aim to bolster its potential outreach.[53] Its content was based on purely activist texts (anticapitalism, antiracism, antimilitarism, the environment), including an interview with Czech anarcho-syndicalist and editor of *A-kontra* A. Funk, discussing the situation of the Czech anarchist movement. Yet only one issue was published, due to prohibitive

[51] AČSS. Interview with Juraj II., January 23, 2023.

[52] "1. máj v Blave. Proti fašizmu, rasizmu a nacionalizmu", *Vlastný názor* 2, no. 3 (1994), p. 11.

[53] "Nová zpráva o anarchizmu na Slovensku", *A-kontra* 5, no. 1–2 (1995), pp. 6–7; AČSS. Interview with Matúš, September 19, 2019.

costs and problems with distribution. At the same time, a plan to change the name of the association was already announced in the magazine.[54]

After only a few months of intensive activity, A.A. changed its name and, on November 11, 1994, was registered by the Ministry of the Interior as a civil association under the name Slobodná Alternatíva (Free Alternative). Among other things, the by-laws highlighted the principles of apoliticism and non-violence, the effort to spread environmental and civic literacy. The official registration of the previously quite loose association of activists also reflects a certain conceptual shift, an effort towards professionalization and greater systematicity in operations, as well as a stronger involvement with the emerging non-profit sector, perceived by the state, at that time, as a hostile, competitive element. This can be seen in the fact that the core of their activities consisted of opposition to Vladimír Mečiar's political regime and Slovak nationalism. At the same time, the personal composition and the agenda had not evolved much. However, this was a retreat from more radical positions, a move towards activities that had the potential to gain broader public support and thus to change the whole society.[55]

Further campaigns of this association were directed against the "Marlboro Rock In", a music talent contest. In the campaign, they used a combination of environmental issues and opposition to Marlboro as a multinational company promoting itself within the youth-oriented rock and alternative scene. They also initiated activities supporting freedom of speech and freedom of the media; they protested, for example, in front of the building of Slovak Television, or at a meeting of supporters of the Mečiar's Movement for Democratic Slovakia at the Pasienky Sports Hall in Bratislava. They organized events against the glorification of the fascist Slovak state (1939–1945), such as a happening in front of a museum in Bratislava, where an exhibition glorifying the Tiso's regime period was held. Activists marched there in paramilitary Hlinka Guard uniforms from the period of World War Two, to remind of the atrocities associated with that regime.[56]

This process of specialization and professionalization can be observed in several movements and non-profit organizations supported by punks and anarchists, and it unfolded relatively quickly. Also, Sloboda zvierat moved its headquarters and main activities to the capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, and eventually become a strong and very visible non-profit organisation. The volunteers who went to help Sloboda zvierat at that time were mostly involved in other initiatives as well, and the office was used also by zinsters for their purposes.[57] Greenpeace, which had already been a multinational organization when it was established in Czechoslovakia, started its activities operations in Slovakia in a fashion reminiscent of purely alternative activities.

[54] *Revolta* 1, no. 1 (1994); AČSS. Interview with Juraj II., January 23, 2023.

[55] Manuscript of a book with interviews with Matúš Ritomský.

[56] Manuscript of a book with interviews with Matúš Ritomský.

[57] AČSS. Interview with Matúš, September 19, 2019.

In the first half of 1990s, there was a kind of symbiosis between the anarchist movement and non-profit organizations. They supported each other in many ways. Daniel recollects the relationship between the nascent anarchist movement and non-profit organizations:

> [...] in Slovakia, there were not enough people who could dedicate themselves to individual "new" agendas exclusively or fully. Such agendas were often mixed across organizations [...] all these agendas came to us as if "all of a sudden" and were already anarchist in nature, which resulted from their subversiveness, defiance and rebellion against the usual way of life and perhaps also from the desire to continue further in the Velvet Revolution. [...] the anarchist movement was able to cover all these new agendas, as it were. On the other hand, this only intensified the ideological chaos within the movement and contributed to the fact that these agendas gradually began to be taken over by other organizations that knew how to devote themselves to these agendas fully and, at the same time, more professionally. [...] The movement thus became empty over time, although it got its second wind later through the dispute of "autonomous versus social" anarchists, which seemed to try to define a relevant anarchist agenda.[58]

Nevertheless, activities connected with the efforts of people from non-profit organizations to reach the mainstream were more difficult to digest for the anarchist or the anarcho-punk scene, while using the environment (offices, technology, infrastructure) of these institutions for their own purposes. However, there were no such open tensions in the activist environment as those between anarchists and the non-profit sector in the Czech environmental movement.[59]

Conclusion

In the early 1990s, alternative movements received quite a lot of coverage in the mass media. For a brief time, punk music moved from the fringes to the centre of interest of a broader audience and publishers. At same time, the commodification of punk was met with a negative response within the punk scene. This happened hand in hand with the strengthening of the anarchist movement in the country, which was at that time tightly interconnected with the punk and hardcore scenes.

After 1989, the Slovak anarchist scene developed in parallel with the Czech one, but with a much smaller intensity and with a slight delay in ideological discussion. Later, *A-kontra* was fundamental in terms of developing the anarchist agenda in Slovakia.

[58] AČSS. Personal communication with Daniel, March 5, 2023.

[59] AČSS. Interview with Juraj II., January 23, 2023. Manuscript of a book with interviews with Matúš Ritomský. For details on the Czech context, see Arnošt Novák, *Tmavozelený svět*.

The punk scene played a significant role in the establishment of the anarchist ideas in Slovakia. In a "punk style" meant that not only the printed materials and posters that were created, but also the organization of events was often characterized by a lack of experience as they were often organised by young people, and in some cases they were characterized by unruliness and the ideological incompatibility of the participating audience. The semantic field of the term "anarchism" was very broad. Although the activists pointed out in interviews that they had read some of the classics of anarchism, the articles on this topic preserved in fanzines show a picture of a very individualistic and, content-wise, a too abstract concept of an anarchist agenda which was mainly based on a communitarian and lifestyle-related understanding of anarchism.

From the point of view of the organization of protest activities, there were significant efforts to combine partying and protesting in a carnival spirit, which partly attracted media attention and created space for addressing the general public. But if the given activities were not further conceptually developed, they would not be able to go beyond the parameters of the individual experience of the participants, as was shown to be the case in the anarchist milieu; this is why, in contrast to the milieu of NGOs like Sloboda zvierat, the anarchists did not achieve more significant results.

Other significant variables were the small number of anarchist activists, as well as the prevailing idea of anarchism as a pacifist ideology, connected with an inability to create safe spaces. Pacifism was seen as a natural attitude, based on the experience 1989's non-violent "Velvet Revolution",[60] and the reception of the ideas of Buddhism and other Eastern teachings that were gaining in popularity. At the same time, anarchists were regularly under attack from neo-Nazis, and the fight against racism, nationalism, and neo-fascism became one of the primary focuses of their activities. During this period, the state authorities did not show much interest in supporting human rights and the fight against the growing neo-Nazi movement; on the contrary, they supported Slovak nationalism and pushed the country into international isolation. This situation also contributed to the strengthening of the ideas of autonomous zones in the anarchist environment as an important part of political and cultural self-organisation, but the implementation of these ideas was only successful to a limited extent.

Another dominant feature of the period was the frequent emphasis on punk's apolitical engagement, manifested, for example, in the reluctance to engage in more profound political debates and in their opposition to political associations, or to politics as such. Tibor referred to this as a "rejection of the ideological nature of anarchism as opposed to a spontaneously functioning anarcho-punk movement. […] I consider the main problem to be the autonomous nature of anarchism without its feeling the mutual need to be coordinated in a political programme."[61] The decision to dissolve A.F.S. was

[60] See, for example, James Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[61] AČSS. Personal communication with Tibor, March2, 2023.

explained by the participants themselves as being caused by a lack of time, which also points to some organizational limits of the contemporary scene, as well as the underestimation of a common institutional platform. It could also be the result of inadequate communication and coordination between the activist centres, as well as of the strong links to the Czech Republic, and of poor efforts to build anarchist structures at home. The shift occurred only in 1997 with the establishment of the Czechoslovak Anarchist Federation (ČSAF). In 1997, a newsletter of anarchists and autonomous groups, *Rudé právo* (Red Law) began to be published in Slovakia, which regularly reported on events on the scene. It was published by activists known from the previous years. Also, the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism and social anarchism appeared more often. However, it was a largely new generation of anarchists in Slovakia that emerged in the middle of the 1990s and got involved in the movement.

The most common argument mentioned by my respondents pertaining to the development of the Slovak anarchist movement was the lack of personalities who were either capable of coordinating activities nationwide or who had a clear, long-term vision, and, in general, the lack of people willing to get more involved. At this point, it is necessary to remember that many activists, often influential individuals with organizational experience, decided to work in the non-profit sector, some of them with remarkable success. Therefore, rather than a lack of strong personalities, the reason for the failure of the first organizing attempts were conceptual differences, divergent views on the methods necessary to fulfil one's own agenda, and the drift of a part of the activists towards the non-profit sector. At a certain juncture in the late 1990s, functional cooperation with emerging non-profit organizations began to be increasingly problematic for a part of the anarcho-punk environment. The focus of some activists towards the non-profit sector and the mainstream weakened the anarchist movement, which subsequently suffered, for some time, from an emptied programme, eventually being dissected into specialized non-profits. Tibor named the situation a "natural disintegration", when a large part of active punks redirected their activities toward different courses and organized anarchism was simply swept aside.

This had a generational dimension as well. Almost all of the anarchist activists of that time were born in the 1970s, and some of them started focusing on personal matters, education, work, family, or diverted their energy towards music, or towards more specifically targeted activist projects (the Animal Liberation Front, Antifa, or various non-profit organizations). In the second half of the 1990s, several activists, from different Slovak regions, decided to live in Zaježová, in what was a dispersed settlement and eco-village in the middle of the countryside, to live freely, alternatively, off the grid, in harmony with nature and with a minimalist relationship with the state. However, most of them eventually returned to the urban environment.

The beginning of the anarchist movement in Slovakia in the post-socialist period was based on a clear rejection of the previous undemocratic regime, in a search for their own evolutionary paths to achieve anarchist ideals. They made efforts to achieve this

through self-organization and wider promotion, using non-violent tactics, gradually focusing on education and discussion. Emphasis was placed on the principles of autonomism, which proclaimed the possibility of achieving freedom in lifestyle, without changing the way the whole society functions. This was also related to the propagated ideas of the spiritual revolution – individual rebirth and emphasis on maintaining (and purifying) one's own scene. Rather than being aimed at a revolutionary suppression of the influence of the state, these strategies represented a search for one's own free space for the realization of the aforementioned ideals, which in some cases had a form of cooperation or transition to the non-profit sector as well as a significant emphasis on the principles of civic activism, which is also in line with the introductory premise concerning the prevalence of *civic anarchism* in the Slovak environment.

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DETOURNEMENT AS SATIRE IN THE BELARUSSIAN NEWSPAPER *NAVINKI*

Gleb Koran

Abstract

Navinki *was a Belarusian newspaper founded in 1998 by the members of a local anarchist group, Čyrvony Žond ("Red Government"). It started as a DIY newspaper with a print run of 299 copies, but by 1999* Navinki *had been officially registered and had started to be sold in government shops and by post. The history of the newspaper was short – it was shut down by a Belarussian court in 2003. But its existence had a big impact on the political culture of Belarus in that a satirical newspaper that mocked both Aliaksandr Lukašenka and oppositional politicians had circulated freely. The founders of* Navinki *saw their satire as being continuous with the tradition of the Situationist International by generally applying the practice of "detournement". It means that the heroes of the stories in the newspaper (state officials or the leaders of opposition parties) were presented in special, non-standard narratives. Also, the start of the 2000s was in Belarus a very tough time in the sense of political affiliation – if a person was interested in politics, he or she*

had to choose a side from just two options (Lukašenka or the mostly national-democratic opposition). Navinki*, with its satire, had been disrupting this dualism, showing both the absurdity of those in power as well as the claims of the opposition. The article briefly shows the history of Belarusian anarchism at the time of independence, addresses the question of why* Navinki *had chosen the methodology of satire, and shows examples of how this satire worked.*

Keywords

satire, anarchism, detournement, Belarus, cultural jamming

Introduction

Does anarchism have a special attitude to the media? There is a substantial tradition of Marxism and critical theory as regards the media, but how preoccupied has anarchism been with it? Or maybe there is a special anarchist approach to media? Surely, before answering this, we must turn to the more fundamental question of the interdependence between theory and practice. Rarely do anarchist movements research all the different theories before constructing their media. There is always some gap between a theory and its application, and sometimes practice just improvises on its own understanding of the theory. The case of the Belarusian newspaper *Navinki* could be presented as an illustration of this. In Belarus during the 1990s Western anarchist theory was not readily available.[1] At the same time, the newspaper during the time it existed (1998–2003) was hugely popular and was published by anarchists. Certainly there are, in history, examples of anarchist newspapers that have used satire such as the French *La Père peinard*, which was being published at the turn of the twentieth century,[2] or the UK newspaper *Class War*, which had been publishing since 1983 by a group with the same name.[3] But it seems that the example of *Navinki* was the first and till this time the last attempt of a satirical-anarchistic newspaper in the post-Soviet space.

This article explores the history of *Navinki*, published by the members of the anarchist group Čyrvony Žond (Red Government) between 1998 and 2003. It was a satirical newspaper that mocked the political reality of Belarus in those times. The style of *Navinki*, in my opinion, can be assigned to a very specific cultural jamming, which I would also

[1] The first official Russian translation of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* appeared in 2000. At the same time, we know for certain that the core members of *Navinki* knew about the works of the Situationist International, but this knowledge was probably fragmentary as they never wrote any serious texts about Situationism.

[2] Alain Faudemay, "L'humour et l'anarchisme: quelques indices d'une convergence possible", *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 99, no. 3, Anarchisme et Création Littéraire (1999), pp. 467–484.

[3] Rich Cross, "British Anarchism in the Era of Thatcherism", in *Against the Grain. The British Far Left from 1956*, ed. Ewan Smith and Matthew Worley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 133–152.

describe as media-political jamming. The main subjects of *Navinki*'s narrative were the political actors of Belarus, so they were mostly objects of detournement. This article then tries to answer the question of why the Belarusian anarchistic group Čyrvony Žond had chosen this method of satire and mocking of Belarusian officials and political opposition and how it was connected with the specific Belarusian political situation of the first decade of independence.

The first part of the article consists of theoretical research into the concepts of "detournement" and "cultural jamming". The second part is devoted to a short history of Belarusian anarchism from 1991 up until *Navinki* arrived on the scene. The next part is a deeper analysis of the newspaper's contents that will help us to understand how this satire worked and how we are dealing here with a special type of cultural jamming, "media-political jamming". This question seems important because after *Navinki* was shut down Belarusian anarchist groups never again used satire in their political practice. On the contrary, these new groups mostly craved after direct action, which led to a huge wave of repression being directed against them. The history of Belarusian anarchism after *Navinki* is explored in the last part of the article.

Between Detournement and Cultural Jamming

I describe the way *Navinki* worked in the media as a "detournement". In the very first issue of *Navinki* we can find a claim that detournement was "the first step towards exiting from the current crisis situation of the contemporary avant-garde movement", which basically consists in the "socialization of the counter-culture via forms of mass culture".[4] Basically, detournement is strongly associated with Guy Debord and the Situationist International and means the creation of a new cultural message from already existing cultural objects. So detournement, in its essence, resembles plagiarism or hijacking. But, without a more deep understanding of the political theory of Situationism and Debord, we can just confuse detournement with such usual cultural practices as collage or pastiche. Detournement is, as it was presented by the Situationists, a special method of struggle against specifically "spectacular capitalism" – it is not just some bohemian fussing about "art for art's sake". So, in short, according to the Situationists contemporary capitalism continues to alienate people from themselves, but it no longer only alienates the worker from their proper wage labor by the mechanism of surplus value (as in Marx's classical text). Alienation exists on the level of all-consuming images that replace real relationships between people. According to Debord, "separation is the alpha and omega of the spectacle".[5]

If our world is just a constant flow of alienated images, then revolutionary praxis means working with these images in a specific way. Exactly at this point, detournement

[4] *Navinki*, February 25, 1998, p. 2.

[5] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2014), p. 8.

appeared as a remedy against the spectacle. As Debord wrote, "Detournement is the flexible language of anti-ideology"[6] because it destroys spectacle from within, working with its parts that consist of images. As we can understand from the previous quote, Debord tried to struggle against any "ideology" as it embodies spectacle, so "detournement" breaks it. And as I have already mentioned, it is a political struggle, not just an empty play of signs and images: "The real values of culture can be maintained only by actually negating culture. But this negation can no longer be a cultural negation. It may in a sense take place within culture, but it points beyond it".[7]

The clearest examples of the detournement of the Situationists came from their famous graffiti, which was drawn on the streets of Paris during the May 1968 uprising. Slogans like "beneath the pavement, the beach" or "be realistic, demand the impossible" resembled advertisements. It parodies the industry of marketing and spectacle itself. Indeed, detournement can also be found as a method used in the films of the members of the Situationist International, along with other visual materials made by its participants (for example, the famous comic strip "The Return of Durutti Column" by Andre Bertrand).

But detournement as a practice has outlasted the Situationists. In the 1980s, the practice of "cultural jamming" developed as a new incarnation of detournement. Here, probably, we are dealing with something of an emasculation of the revolutionary ideas of the Situationists, as cultural jamming does not always fit into the revolutionary ideas of Debord and his comrades. Worse, culture jamming can sometimes be turned against any revolutionary practice because "parody and irony are the dominant motifs of many successful mass-marketing campaigns".[8]

As such, it resembles another notion of the Situationists – recuperation. From the point of view of Sadie Plant, a researcher into the Situationists, this notion suggested that voices of dissent are "actually subject to processes of inversion which give an entirely new and affirmative meaning to critical gestures. Represented in the spectacle, the vocabulary of revolutionary discourse is taken up and used to support the existing networks of power."[9] But here, as with cultural jamming, we can also have some cases of "double recuperation" – which is to say, even as authors try to detour around the reality of spectacle, they can, in turn, be recuperated (hence, "double recuperation") by the contemporary marketing industry. We will still however need to pay attention to the derivation of "cultural jamming". Jamming is usually understood as some sort

[6] Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 110.

[7] Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 111.

[8] Cristine Harold, "Pranking Rhetoric: 'Culture jamming' as Media Activism", *Critical Studies in Media and Communication* 21, no. 3 (2004), p. 191.

[9] Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 75–76.

of improvisation or freeplay. For example, jazz musicians are famous for their practice of jamming. Situationists in their early years were optimistic and regarded playfulness positively, too. As the Situationists claimed themselves – "Due to its marginal existence in relation to the oppressive reality of work, play is often regarded as fictitious. But the work of the situationists is precisely the preparation of ludic possibilities to come".[10]

Belarusian Anarchism in the First Decade of Turbulent Independence

Even in its beginning, the anarchist movement in Belarus was not homogenous since already in the early 1990s we can find in it three tendencies, which were more or less geographically-based. The first one is from the city of Homieĺ, in the southeast part of Belarus. Here, in the autumn of 1990, the first anarchist group in Belarus was created, at first it was just called "Struggle" and afterward entered the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists of the USSR.[11] A Syndicalist attitude was strongest in Homieĺ, probably because of the large number of different big factories and production sites in the city. Because of its mostly "hardcore" anarchist approach, the Homieĺ group in the beginning of the 1990s was the most removed from any contacts and allies within the Belarusian democratic opposition. The agenda of "national liberation" that was shared by the opposition was never taken seriously by Homieĺ's anarchists. Unfortunately, after the 1990s, Homieĺ's place on the map of Belarusian anarchism almost disappeared. There were not any strong groups or movements, only individual activists from the city and surrounding region. The most famous left activist from Homieĺ is Juryj Hlušakoŭ, now a member of the Belarusian Green Party who was among the founders of the Struggle group and who unsuccessfully tried to register as a candidate for the Belarusian presidential elections in 2010 (he did not get enough of signatures[12]). He was also a member of Homieĺ's city council from 2003 until 2008.

The second anarchist tendency could be found on the opposite side of Belarus – in the city of Hrodna, in the West, near the Belarusian-Polish border. This place was famous in the 1990s for its many anarcho-punk bands with political lyrics. The most famous was probably the band called "Deviation" that had formed in 1993.[13] It seems that the proximity to Poland was the main influence on the anarchists from Hrodna and its vicinity. Visiting Poland between the collapse of the Soviet Union and 2004 was visa-free. Also, the broadcasts of Polish TV channels and radio stations were available

[10] "Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play", *Situationist International Online*, accessed January 16, 2023, https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/play.html.

[11] Ûrij Glušakov, "Anarhisty v Belarusi" [Anarchists in Belarus], *Politring*, March 24, 2019, https://politring.com/journal/articles/25433-yuriy-glushakov-anarhisty-v-belarusi.html.

[12] "Ûrij Glušakov o o snâtii svoej kandidatury" [Yury Glushakov on withdrawing his candidacy], Greens Belarusian Political Party, October 29, 2010, https//www.belgreens.net/be/2010/10/697.

[13] "Deviation. Grodno-pankbelorusskaâ èkstremaĺsˆina" [Deviation. Grodno-punkbelarusian extremism], *Muzykaĺnaâ Gazeta*, August 2, 1998, https://nestor.minsk.by/mg/1998/30/mg83004.html.

in the Hrodna area, so the locals could learn Polish by way of it and communicate in Poland easily. Additionally, persons interested in anarchism visited the squats that were popular in Poland during the 1990s, and these were the main source of their information about anarchism. Thus, the anarchists from Hrodna were the most militant (as in Poland, fights between antifascists and nationalists were common during that time), anti-Soviet, and even anti-communistic (as Hrodna was part of Poland in times of 1921–1939 and still had the label "the most Western-looking city in Belarus") in Belarus. To the present day we can still find some anti-Soviet resentment among some of the punk bands from Hrodna,[14] something which was started by the aforementioned band, Deviation. Also, we can say that Hrodna's anarchists were sometimes supporters of the Belarusian democratic opposition, as some "national" agendas were not too far away from Grodno's anarchism. For example, some of the ex-members of Hrodna's punk bands had taken positions in the Union of Poles in Belarus. At least for the Belarusian state, this organization seemed a part of a Western conspiracy against the sovereignty of the Belarusian state.[15] In addition, during some of this time, Deviation's recordings were being released on a Belarusian music label that promoted a "national" band called "BMA"- but the band soon left the label in the wake of the ensuing scandal. More than that, some underground distributions that spread records of Hrodna punk bands also distributed merchandise with symbols of the Belarusian opposition. Finally, "national-anarchists" of the 2010s (more about them below) were the main fan group of Dzeciuki, a new-comer Belarusian "nationalistic-punk band" from Hrodna that was formed by people who were playing in the punk bands in the 1990s.

Finally, the third grouping of anarchists, and the one that is the main subject of this paper, were based in Minsk. From the start, they had connections with Homieĺ's and Hrodna's movements, but compared to these groups gave more of a bohemian appearance. The reason for this was the central role of Minsk as a capital with a richer cultural life – in the early 1990s it was full of poets, artists, and musicians who were not in the tradition of Soviet socialist realism, instead experimenting with new forms of art. The first contemporary art groups appeared in Belarus during *Perestroyka* times and most of them were from Minsk.[16] The same can be said about the first Belarusian alternative rock bands, which were mostly from the capital. As an anarchist movement

[14] "Pesni grodnenskih grupp 'Dzeciuki' i 'Kal'ân' vošli v 60 belorusskoâzyčnyh hitov sovremennosti" [Songs of Grodno's bands "Dzeciuki" and "Kalyan" were included in the 60 best Belarusian-language hits of our time], *Hrodna-Life*, November 26, 2018, https://ru.hrodna.life/2018/11/26/pesni-grodnenskih-grupp-dzieciuki-i-kalyan-voshli-v-60-belorusskoyazyichnyih-hitov-sovremennosti.

[15] Paulina Pospieszna, *Democracy Assistance from the Third Wave: Polish Engagement in Belarus and Ukraine* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), p. 13.

[16] Elena Rusakevič, "Značenie tvorčeskogo opyta neoficiaĺnyh hudožestvennyh obedinenij i grupp 1985–1991 gg. dlâ iskusstva Belarusi" [The value of the creative experience of informal

started to appear in Minsk, it drew the attention of many such city dwellers and by the middle-end of the 1990s it was already differentiated from Hrodna and Homieĺ by its "cultural" characters. But later, attacks against their "bohemian attitude" were directed against *Navinki* and the Minsk group by the other Belarusian anarchists.

We must understand that this map is quite schematic, and that there were a lot of contacts and common initiatives between these three tendencies. From the point of view of Belarusian researcher Aliaksandr Lanieuski, Belarusian anarchism should be classified not according to geography, but to generational differences – so Homieĺ's group is the first generation, Minsk's Čyrvony Žond and Hrodna's punks the second, and anarcho-militants the third (see more about them at the end of this article). The author situated these generations in a conditional timeline based on the time of their activity that accord to the decades of Belarusian history – the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s consequently. The first generation was under the influence of Syndicalism, the second was under subcultural influences (like the antifa-movement or DIY-punk bands), and the third craved for "direct action".[17]

Navinki and the Political Situation of Belarus on the Cusp of the 2000s

In 1998, the first issue of *Navinki* was printed. From the start, the creators of the newspaper played with the cultural background that was popular in Belarus at that time. For example, the logo of *Navinky* was simply stolen from the logo of the newspaper *Naviny*; the designer only changed a couple of letters. The latter was a newspaper based on the ideas of the national democratic opposition and was a continuation of the newspaper *Svaboda* ("Freedom"), which had been published from 1990 to 1997. The name of the newspaper is a play on "naviny", which means news in Belarusian, but Navinki is the name of what in the 1990s was a town, or really a suburb, just outside of Minsk in which the biggest mental hospital in the country is situated. It was in exactly this institution that the future chief editor of *Navinki*, Pauliuk Kanavaĺčyk, had been examined during his health evaluation for obligatory military service (in the end he did not serve in the army). There were three primary founders of the newspaper – Kanavaĺčyk, Alieh Novikaŭ (historian and journalist), and Alieś Mazur. All of them were members of Čyrvony Žond and the newspaper was started as a DIY with a small declared circulation of 299 copies, as this was the maximum number of copies that a newspaper could print by law without official registration. But already in 1999, it got its official registration and until 2003 it could be bought by subscription via the State Belarusian Post or in the nationalized BelSoyuzpechat, the dominant chain of small shops and kiosks selling

art associations and groups 1985–1991 for the art of Belarus], *Pytanni mastacvaznaustva, ètnalogii i fal'klarystyk,* no. 29 (2021), pp. 113–117.

[17] Aliaksandr Lanieuski, "From Protest to Resistance: The Case of Belarusian Anarchists", *Political Sphere* 20, no.1 (2013), pp. 114–115.

newspapers and magazines.[18] Circulation during these official years varied – from a couple hundred in the beginning to fifteen thousand at its peak. *Navinki* was closed in 2003 after two official cautions from the court, and Kanavaĺčyk was blamed for the second time for "insulting the honor and dignity of The President of Belarus".[19]

In different interviews, the publishers of *Navinki* mentioned that their main influences were the ideas of Debord and the Situationist International as well as the activities of the Polish group Pamarańczowa Alternatywa (Orange Alternative). It seems that the founders of the newspaper were far from the orthodox Soviet-oriented left-wing media discourse, because the latter rarely worked with satire (except Soviet satire directed against the "imperialist West"). Kanavaĺčyk, for example, wrote regarding Čyrvony Žond that the "sense of [our] conceptions was an artistic manipulation of society's prejudices and images of mass-culture, and as a result 'serious politics' turned into conceptual banter and funny carnival. The motto of Čyrvony Žond was 'Struggle and Relax!'"[20] But we must remain suspicious of such a direct pronouncement and try to understand how exactly *Navinki* embodied detournement based on the materials of the newspaper. But we must also not forget that *Navinki* tried to be an officially registered newspaper – it means it was not just some form of revolutionary media that could afford to forget about the customers' demands and propagate a revolutionary ideal, but also to attract them with special content. Also, this official status implied that the newspaper must be commercially successful, at least on official documents, so the editor team understood that it must be sold as much as possible.

The Belarus of the early 2000s and especially the 1990s was a very different place from today's Belarus. Despite Aliaksandr Lukašenka having already gained full power and employing selective repression, on some levels of life (especially cultural) the country was still relatively free. To be sure, we cannot in 2022 imagine such a level of cultural freedom. The Belarusian regime gradually increased the levels of repression and the end of 1990s was just the beginning of a long process. The situation changed

[18] The first request for registration was declined. The *Navinki* team then started the "Legalize It" campaign with the détournement of a photo of the German chancellor Gerhard Schroder smoking a huge joint with weed rolled in "Navinki paper".

[19] "Galoŷny rèdaktar gazety 'Navinki' Paŷlûk Kanavaľčyk za 'raspaŷsûdžanne zavedama ilžyvyh zvestak, âkiâ gan'bâc' gonar i godnasc' Prèzidènta Rèspubliki Belarus' – atrymaŷ štraf u pamery 100 bazavyh adzinak" [The editor-in-chief of "Navinki" newspaper Pavlyuk Kanavalchyk received a fine of 100 base units for "spreading knowingly false information that dishonors the honor and dignity of the President of the Republic of Belarus"], *Spring-96*, May 20, 2003, https://spring96.org/be/news/432.

[20] Pavlûk Konoval'čik, "Istoriâ anarhičeskogo dviženiâ Belarusi v pervye 10 let posle razvala SSSR" [The history of the anarchist movement in Belarus in the first 10 years after the collapse of the USSR], *Pramen*, September 10, 2020, https://pramen.io/ru/2020/09/istoriya-anarhicheskogo-dvizheniya-belarusi-v-pervye-10-let-posle-razvala-sssr/.

drastically after the protests of 2020 when almost all of the independent media in the country was shut down. All independent media that was untouched by the state is not currently working on political topics at all. So it is impossible to imagine a working independent satirical newspaper in contemporary Belarus. This niche of satire has now been mostly taken by internet-media such as telegram-channels or YouTube channels. But what was special with *Navinki* was that it mocked both the Belarusian state and the Belarusian opposition, something that is now impossible given the strong polarization in society, and consequently in media.[21] For example, satire in the independent media mocks the Belarusian state, and satire in the state media mocks the opposition, but all of the "middle positions" have been lost or are marginal.

It seems that across the world we can find a few satirical newspapers or magazines that in their use of the practices of detournement and cultural jamming resemble *Navinki* – the most obvious of these are the American *Mad* magazine and the French *Charlie Hebdo*. A not so obvious example is the Polish *Nie* (No). The authors of *Navinki* definitely knew about the latter two publications as they sometimes translated materials from the French media and were aware of the media scene in France. *Nie* was founded in 1990 in Poland and was hugely popular during the 1990s (it had a circulation of 600,000 copies in 1991),[22] and so could hardly not be noticed by the publishers of *Navinki*. In addition, there was the tradition of Soviet and later Belarusian satire magazines. Despite the fact that the level of satire was not as sharp as in *Navinki*, the Soviet *Krokodil* (Crocodile) and Soviet Belarusian (and later just Belarusian) *Vozhyk* (Hedgehog) obviously was known to the writers from Čyrvony Žond. Although *Vozhyk* contained pretty sharp satire and mocked the first Belarusian president on it pages during the early days of Belarusian independence, soon after Lukašenka's coming to power it returned to a theme of assessing moral blame as opposed to using humor. It was finally shut down in 2022.[23] At the same time, *Krokodil* during the Soviet times focused its blame more on Western imperialism or internal enemies than it chose to make fun of them. From the point of view of Emil Draitser, a researcher of Russian literature, "the magazine is primarily designated to raise brows in indignation of some moral defects in people's consciousness or state bureaucracy, to express the state's disapproval of the shortcomings of the state apparatus or of certain behavioral aberrations on the part of the population".[24]

[21] Samuel A. Greene, "You Are What You Read: Media, Identity, and Community in the 2020 Belarusian uprising", *Post-Soviet Affairs* 38, no. 1–2 (2022), pp. 88–106.

[22] Joseph A. Reaves, "Ex-Polish Spokesman Turns 'Rebel'", *Chicago Tribune,* August 08, 1991, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1991-08-08-9103260829-story.html.

[23] "Zakryvaetsâ legendarnyj ûmorističeskij žurnal 'Vožyk'" [The legendary comic magazine "Vozhyk" is closing], *Zerkalo.io,* November 19, 2021, https://news.zerkalo.io/cellar/5983.html.

[24] Emil Draitser, "Soviet Underground Jokes as a Means of Popular Entertainment", *Journal of Popular Culture* 23, no. 1 (1989), p. 121.

But the main difference between these newspapers and magazines and *Navinki* is that the latter was created by anarchists. So *Navinki* was a satire newspaper, but satire can be just one of the dimensions of detournement. Of course, sometimes satire bears in itself some social criticism – though making people laugh at many social facts, it still contains some "blind spots" that are specific ideological points of view of satire. In our case, this ideological point of view was anarchism, which, fortunately, was unlikely to be noticed by whole groups of Belarusian readers as the level of political consciousness in the country was still not high. We, honestly, cannot talk properly about which branch or movement of anarchism was promoted by *Navinki*. It seems that the theory and practice of the authors of the newspaper were the same. It means that the theory of detournement was enough for *Navinki* to have some fun at the expense of Belarusian officials and the democratic opposition. Also, according to the memories of some members of the editing team, the office of *Navinki* was always full of different kinds of people (obviously not just anarchists). Some of them were part of the newspaper, some of them were just guests, but some materials used in the newspaper was created by this "collective mind". An article could be started by one person and finished by another. There were only a couple of constant writers at *Navinki* who used their (still fake) names regularly. During 2002–2003 there were sometimes in the inside part of *Navinki* special sections called "Black Navinki" devoted to the theory and practice of contemporary anarchism. But the material of this separate "inner newspaper" is not adequate to ascertain the newspaper's proper ideological stance. Mostly, materials of these special sections were news about some anarchist events in Eastern Europe or a popular summarization of the tendencies in contemporary anarchism.

We are still interested in special "media-political jamming" and it seems that that way of mocking political processes inside Belarus can be seen as some form of political resistance. As Gilman-Oplaskiy noted, "Culture jamming utilizes an 'insurrectionary style' and can escape vilification by way of wit and aesthetic appeal. In our postmodern era, we need processes that are open, autonomous, fun, funny, and that can be carried out anywhere at any time; culture jamming is one modality for exploring and enacting these processes."[25] But objects of fun for political-media jamming cannot be found just anywhere, they have a particular place in history and in our case this is Belarus at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.

As Lukašenka had already concentrated all state power in his own hands by 1996, this period was a time of struggle between him and the mostly liberal and nationalist opposition. The latter was not very successful in this fight and not just because of the authoritarian character of the state, but also due to the very special policies of the op-

[25] Richard Gilman-Opalsky, "Unjamming the Insurrectionary Imagination: Rescuing Detournment from the Liberal Complacencies of the Cultural Jamming", *Theory in Action* 6, no. 3 (2013), p. 28. Accessed January 16, 2023, DOI:10.3798/tia.1937-0237.13019.

position. Promoting market reforms or a single, official language (Belarusian) as representing a "European choice" for Belarus, as the opposition did, could hardly find much support among the wider population. As the sociologist Elena Gapova characterized the attitude of common Belarusian people to such a European way of policies presented by the opposition: "To them, the voyage is completely unrealistic and probably not even an object of desire; instead, it represents what the new rich can afford and do, at the expense of poor folks. The European idea and what it encompasses is not the common people's project, and they have no 'European self' to 'recollect.'"[26]

At that time, most of the opposition's media were full of right-wing and neoliberal ideologies that characterized the Belarusian state as "left" and "Socialistic". *Navinki* exposed the absurdity of such claims with satirical critics of the Belarusian regime from the leftist point of view. The newspaper devoted considerable space to all the cuts in social benefits and, in particular, to the disappearance of the welfare state in general in Belarus under the rule of Lukašenka. So, the political history of independent Belarus almost always presupposed strong polarization – you must choose a side, either for Lukašenka or the democratic opposition. *Navinki* struggled with this binarity, objects of their detournement were on both of these sides and, with that, they tried to show that there is not such a big difference between them, just as with Debord the concentrated and diffuse spectacle is still a part of modern, spectacular capitalism. This satirizing of not just Lukašenka and the Belarusian state but also of the Belarusian opposition was one of the reasons for the huge popularity of the newspaper. Never before and rarely after was the opposition of Lukašenka an object of fun from the non-state media. At the same time, not just the policies of the opposition (mentioned above), but even the way of their organization were the opposite of any anarchistic attitude. The Belarusian democratic opposition never had strong grass-roots organizations (at least among urban or agricultural workers, which were the bulk of the population in the late period of the Soviet Union and early independence). During the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was no large mass movement or organization advocating for Belarusian independence, in contrast to the neighboring countries (such as Lithuania or Ukraine), and because of this the branding of Belarus as "Soviet Vendee" became quite popular. After Lukašenka transformed the state into an authoritarian system in 1996, it became hard for members of political parties or movements find a means of existing inside Belarus, so they turned to foreign donors. This had dangerous consequences – not only forgetting about the Belarusian people themselves (failing to organize them into grass-roots movements), but also led to an addiction on such foreign help.[27] From the point of

[26] Elena Gapova, "On Nation, Gender, and Class Formation in Belarus…and Elsewhere in the Post-Soviet World", *Nationality Papers* 30, no. 4 (2002), p. 646.

[27] Alexey Pikulik and Sofie Bedford, "Aid Paradox: Strengthening Belarusian Non-Democracy through Democracy Promotion", *East European Politics and Societies* 33, no. 2 (2019), pp. 378–399.

view of *Navinki* it seems that Lukašenka and the Belarusian opposition were different sides of the same coin (or the same "spectacle") as both of them were not connected with common people and did not take care of them.

In the next section, I will attempt to analyze three different objects of *Navinki*'s detournement – international political subjects, the Belarusian state, and the Belarusian opposition. Doing this, let us see how *Navinki* related to all of them and find the specific ideological positions of the newspaper.

Objects of Detournement in *Navinki* from George W. Bush to Naked Women

International topics were usually presented in *Navinki* only if they had some connection with Belarus. But if they did not have this connection, it was still a special "column of the emigrant" where Belarusian authors from different European countries presented their views on international politics. Most international news was presented in *Navinki* from the parodic viewpoint of the Belarusian state to the effect that Western countries everywhere were hatching conspiracies against Belarus. This same narrative was presented, and still is, in official Belarusian media.

For example, the first issue of the newspaper from 1998 had an investigative story on the topic of why the Belarusian and Japanese hockey teams played to a draw in the 1998 Olympics.[28] A (fictional) Japanese journalist had provided the editors with insider information that alleged that Japan had replaced the regular hockey puck with one operated by remote control. This explains why Japan could score goals while Belarus did not. The story ends like a thriller: this Japanese insider was found dead in Tokyo with the puck in his throat. In this story we can find a typical narrative of the official Belarusian media – that Western countries (Japan among them) always played unfairly with Belarus and that we could not trust them. Another good example was connected to a huge diplomatic scandal in 1998 concerning the eviction by Lukašenka of Western ambassadors from the suburbs of Minsk. The parodic journalistic research was about the destiny of the British ambassador in Minsk after he fled Belarus.[29] *Navinki* told the story about how he now had a stall near Wembley stadium from which he was selling low-quality clothes from China. In post-Soviet countries during the 1990s, many stadiums were used as markets and were operated by a lot of small businessmen who were selling mostly low-quality goods. So, *Navinki*'s story transfers the ambassador of the UK to a fictional, but very well-known from the local reader's circumstances, world of small market merchants. The conclusion of this journalistic research consciously repeats the narratives of state media – that many Western ambassadors were simply

[28] "Padvoh" [The trick], *Navinki*, February 25, 1998, p. 4.

[29] "Novyja pryhody pasloŭ u Bielarusi" [The new adventures ambassadors in Belarus], *Navinki*, January 29, 1999, p. 10–11.

Адзінае,
што нас аб'ядноўвае!
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Падпішыся на газэту
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Кошт падпіскі на 1 месяц
(4 нумары) – 1920 руб.
ДАСТАЎКА КУР'ЕРАМ!

Picture 1

useless and that their homeland does not need them. In the small suburbs of Minsk, they had found themselves a warm place under the sun.

Navinki was finally closed in 2003 when the Iraq war started. Considerable space in the newspaper's last issues were dedicated to this event. Most of them were predictions about how Belarus will change due to war (will it be another victim of an attack from the US or not?), or else it aggressively mocked the Belarusian opposition who supported the US. The most important element in all the material about the war was Belarus. Lastly, *Navinki* also made a collage advertisement featuring Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush, who are both reading *Navinki* (Picture 1). The caption to the photo read "The only thing that unites us" and below it there was a call to subscribe to *Navinki*. So almost all the international topics were exploited in *Navinki* as a way of satirizing the Belarusian state's suspicions of the West.

Belarusian state officials and the president were also direct objects of jamming, but it seems that the editors understood that they must be very careful with such materials. By 1998 the Belarusian state already had considerable experience in shutting down independent media, so *Navinki* easily could be the next step in such a process. Thus, for the most part, images of Lukašenka in *Navinki* did not suggest direct criticism of him, but implied it on a deeper level of detournement. For example, on the cover of an issue from 2000, Lukašenka was presented in place of Che Guevara in the iconic image of the Cuban revolutionary with the title "LukaChenko visited the island of freedom".[30] It seemed ironic for the editorial team that Lukašenka tried to present himself in South America as a populist leftist leader (similar to Morales or Chavez), but in Belarus it was well understood that he was clearly much more authoritarian in nature and was turning toward neoliberal policies.

Finally, the cover of one of the last issues of *Navinki*[31] presented a collage of Lukašenka, Pauliuk Kanavaĺčyk (the editor-in-chief of *Navinki*), and the editors-in-chief of two other independent newspapers. All of them are situated on a football field, but Lukašenka is the referee and the others are just footballers. Lukashenko shows them the red card (sending them off from the field) and yells "Get off the field of information!" to Kanavaĺčyk, which means the possible banning of *Navinki*. In the previous issue, it was also the parodic statement of the editorial team of *Navinki* that some spies or the opposition were trying to initiate a quarrel between *Navinki* and the president.[32] With this, *Navinki* tried with humor to show that their newspaper is still independent and that by closing it the Belarusian state will not see much new support from the West. Thus, the editorial team was careful about "mocking" Lukašenka and the Belarusian

[30] *Navinki*, September 20, 2000, p. 1.

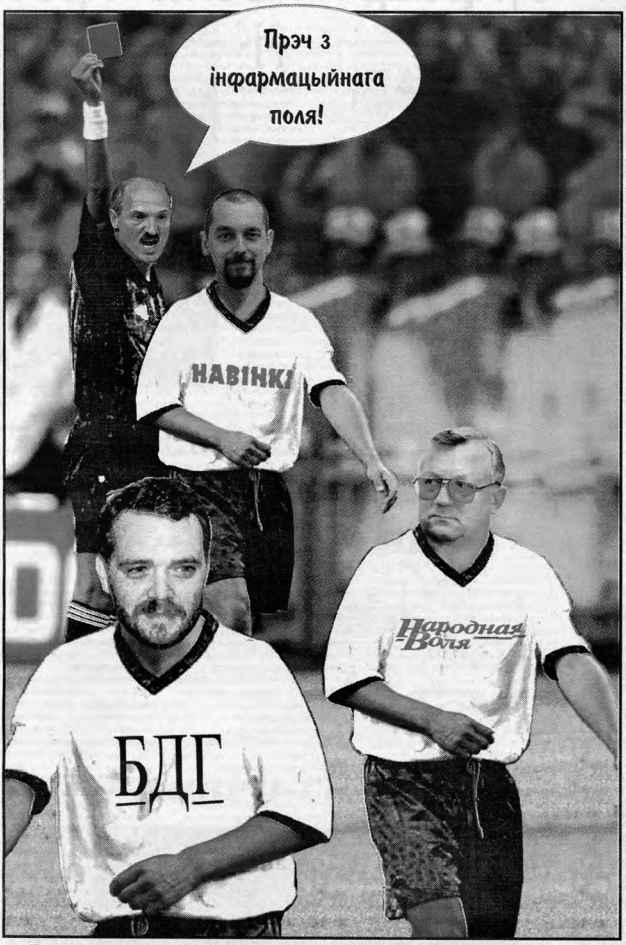
[31] *Navinki*, May 29, 2003, p. 1.

[32] "5-â kalenka rèdaktara. Nehta hoča pasvaryc' nas z prèzidèntam!" [The fifth column of the editor. Someone wants to quarrel with the president!], *Navinki*, May 22, 2003, p. 1.

Наша газэта атрымала два папярэджаньні

НАВІНКІ

29 мая – 5 чэрвеня 2003 №15(94) Кошт свабодны



Беспрэцэдэнтную зачыстку распачало напярэдадні сэзону водпускаў Міністэрства інфармацыі РБ: адразу тройка выданьняў запар атрымала па некалькі афіцыйных папярэджаньняў. Сярод «штрафнікоў» апынуліся газэты *Навінкі* (2), *Белорусская Деловая Газета* (3 разам з дадаткам *БДГ. Для служебного пользования*) і *Народная Воля* (1). З такім судзействам неўзабаве ў гульні застануцца толькі *Советская Белоруссия* ды *Японские кроссворды*...

Бліц-крыг супраць нячэснай прэсы

Стар.2

Оф-сАйд

Ад лаўкі запасных – Да лавы падсудных

Арол ці рэшка, вырашае судзьдзя.
Рэфэры ў полі – краіны арбітар.
Лажануўся ў гульні – адкажы за базар,
Сачы за мятлой, галкіпэр.

Сьвісток, парушэньне правілаў – вон!
Над спартсмэнам урач у белым халаце.
Нам патрэбны высокатэхнічны «футбол»,
Парушальніку месца ў «прэс-хаце»!

Завалодаў мячом – апрацуй,
Да варот бягі хутка.
Гуляй па паняцьях, а не як лох,
Сьцеражыся – «кумаўская мутка»!

Роў трыбун,
Мяч па-за гульнёй – у аўце.
Мясцовы «Мілан» праб'е ўпрыканцы
Апошні дзяржаўны пэнальці.

Ярыла Пшанічны

Шаноўныя чытачы!
Не бяз сувязі з рознымі пэртурбацыямі, праз якія сёньня праходзіць нашая газэта, улетку чакайце аднаўленьня працы нашага сайту: **www.navinki.net**

МОДНЫ ПОСТЭР у падарунак ад рэдакцыі
на стар.4-5

Съледзтва вядуць КАЛАБКІ

Дэтэктыўны комікс на стар.8

Picture 2

state, as it could become a question of the very future existence of the newspaper. At the same time, the position of the newspaper was ambiguous – it was never shy about mocking the Belarusian president, but this humor was not so rude as when they were mocking the opposition. For example, in an issue from 2002, there was material about Lukašenka as a clown.[33] The text stated that in today's hard times Belarus needs a laugh, so the president is making ridiculous statements as a kind of laughter therapy. The piece also contains an analysis of the images and behavior of cultish clowns from the Soviet era by comparing them with Lukašenka. In addition, the newspaper often mocked Lukašenka via reported speech – meaning that offensive or critical remarks against him were presented as having been written or spoken by some other person and not by the newspaper itself. For example, it could be from a bad dream about Lukašenka of the opposition leader, or a fictitious speech by some world leader, and so on. But these depictions did not seem as harsh as those that we found on the pages of the newspaper that mocked the opposition parties. But the Belarusian state under Lukašenka has never had a sense of humor, so it was precisely stemming from the charge of insulting the President of Belarus that the newspaper was closed.

Compared to the Belarusian state, on the contrary, the Belarusian opposition was usually very strongly mocked by *Navinki*. The reason for this has already been mentioned: by the end of the 1990s, there were no longer any doubts that Lukašenka's regime was an authoritarian dictatorship, but the democratic opposition remained a sacred cow in the independent media. It was rarely criticized, so *Navinki* filled in the spaces for the entirety of the independent media. As I have already discussed, the opposition movement in Belarus for the most part promoted a market economy and nationalism that contrasted very strongly with anarchism. So, the authors of *Navinki* felt no qualms about having a laugh at the expense of the leaders of the opposition. There were no outlets of Belarusian independent media before or after *Navinki* that criticized (even in satirical form) to such an extent the Belarusian opposition.

For example, the website of *Navinki* had an online vote about the possible future career of Paviel Sieviaryniec, one of the leaders of the opposition. The choices offered were that he will become president, that he will become a priest (as he was a devout Christian), that he will become a famous Mafiosi (as the state put him in jail many times), and so on. The final results with the comments were published in the first issue of the magazine that appeared after the closing of the newspaper.[34] There was interesting material elsewhere in that first *Navinki* magazine from 2003, in which leaders of different oppositional parties and movements were compared to different models of

[33] "Moj liubimy kloŭn" [My favorite clown], *Navinki*, December 5, 2002, p. 4–5.

[34] "Sieviaryniec vyjšaŭ na pensijuju Što daliej?... (Vyniki internet-halasavańnia, praviedzienaha na sajcie www.navinki.net") [Sieviaryniec has retired. What is next?...(The results of online-voting conducted on the website www.navinki.net)], *Navinki*, January-February, 2004, p. 8.

cars popular in Belarus.[35] For example, Stanislaŭ Šuškievič, the first Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, was compared to a Mercedes-190 with the comment that he has "the look of luxury, but is an old model and demands a lot of money for repair". The leader of the opposition Communist party, Siarhiej Kaliakin, was compared with the first model of a Soviet-era car, "Zhiguli" (tested, unpretentious, can break-down at any moment). In this material, we can see a typical detournement in which the quality of cars as popular consumer products are compared with the public images of politicians (who are also, in some senses, consumer products).

As the Situationists had done some 50 years earlier, *Navinki* sometimes used photos of naked or half-naked women as objects for detournement. Sometimes they even played upon women's status as sexual objects, parodying the tabloids when they would print on the cover of the newspaper "you can find a naked woman with big boobs on page seven".[36] But the most vivid use of women's bodies as sexual objects was made with a critique of the Belarusian opposition that parodied official state media. One issue from 2003 contained a story by KanavaĺČyk that begin with him receiving an e-mail from an unknown address with photos of a naked woman[37] (Picture 3). The text in the letter was from this woman. She asked if *Navinki* was interested in new material, which would be available by calling a certain telephone number. But this number was that of the opposition youth organization Zubr (Bison). This organization was similar to many young political organizations across the Europe trying to organize so-called soft revolutions (or "color revolutions") like Otpor in Serbia or Kmara in Georgia.[38] Zubr arose in Belarus before the presidential elections of 2001 and ended its existence after the presidential elections of 2006. So this piece presented the situation as though oppositional organizations are now trying to recruit new supporters by seducing them with photos of naked women. The caption under the photo concluded that Zubr has found a new form of recruiting – instead of "he must go" (the motto of the opposition, "he" is Lukašenka), today it is "come to me" (such as their version of Zubr, showing photos of naked women seducing men). It seems that this material was fictitious and Zubr did not recruit supporters with photos of naked women, but the narrative of *Navinki* was made in the rude style of the official Belarusian media, which was always blaming the opposition for a multitude of sins. So it was not just a parody of the opposition (which never recruited supporters with photos of naked women), but also a parody of the state media's constructing conspiracy theories about the opposition.

[35] "Palityki – aŭtamabili" [Politicians – cars], *Navinki*, December, 2003, p. 10–11.

[36] *Navinki*, September 20, 2000, p. 1.

[37] Editorial Office, "Achmurennie "zubroŭki" [Seduction by "zubrouka"], *Navinki*, April 10, 2003, p. 2.

[38] Olena Nikolayenko, "Youth Movements and Elections in Belarus", *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 3 (2015), pp. 468–492.

дакладней тое, што ад яго засталося, правёў пікет у падтрымку дзеяньняў ЗША ў Іраку. Лёзунгі на плякатах арыгінальнасьцю не адрозьніваліся, а некаторыя нават былі прыцягнутыя за вушы з беларускай палітычнай рэчаіснасьці: «Хусэйн должен уйти», «Долой тиранию», «Америка, мы с

KampramAt@tut.by

Ахмурэньне «зуброўкі»

Або як галоўны рэдактар *Навінак* амаль не ўступіў у арганізацыю «Зубр»

попросить Вас. Ваше издание публикует многие материалы, может быть и это Вам подойдет. О своем решении сообщите, пожалуйста, по этому электронному адресу. Благодарю.
Фотографии буду высылать двумя письмами, иначе большой объем будет.
Еще раз благодарю. Жду Вашего ответа.
С уважением, Виктория К.»
І фоткі, варта прызнаць, аказаліся сапраўды вельмі «своеобразные». Смазьлівая камандзірка «Зубра» фігуравала на іх ува ўсіх магчымых позах.
«Звычайная парнуха», – скажаце вы. Магчыма... Аднак нас зацікавіў той эфэкт, які аказалі фоткі на самога галоўнага рэдактара ды ўсю мужчынскую частку калектыву рэдакцыі. Глянуўшы на прывабнае дзявочае цела, ўсе адразу хацелі былі кінуцца шукаць нумары «зуброўскіх» пэйджэраў на сьценах і платах гораду, падпісаных імем Вікторыя. Выратавала ад пагрозы ўступленьня рэдактара *Навінак* і Ко ў «зубры» толькі апэратыўна набытая бутэлька «Зуброўкі» ды тэрміновае стрыптыз-шоў, выкананае сіламі жаночай часткі рэдакцыі.
Аналіз гэтага інцыдэнту яскрава даводзіць, што «зубры» ня сьпяць у шапку, а абкатваюць новыя тэхналёгіі па вэрбоўцы маладых людзей у свае злавесныя структуры. І калі на такую нажыўку павёўся нават загартаваны ў амурных справах навінкаўскі гілрэд, то што ўжо казаць пра падлеткаў, што толькі-толькі ўступаюць у пэрыяд полавага сасьпяваньня? Так што, зь вясновымі гармонамі варта чакаць і чарговай «зубровай» эрэкцыі ●

Рэдакцыя

Беларускую апазыцыйную грамадзкасьць даўно хвалявaў гзв. фэномэн арганізацыі «Зубр». Узьнікшы раптам зь ніадкуль, нарабіўшы досыць шуму, «зубры» зноў былі апусьціліся ў небыцьцё. Аднак, відаць, рана ставіць на іх крыж. У гэтай арганізацыі яшчэ ёсьць які-ніякі патэнцыял.
Нядаўна на рэдакцыйную скрыню kampramat@tut.by прыйшоў ліст на імя гілрэда *Навінак* наступнага зьместу (па зразумелых прычынах мы ня ўказваем прозьвішча заяўленага аўтара ліста):
«Здравствуйте, господин Канавальчик!
Обращается к Вам Виктория К. Я являюсь одним из командиров ЗУБРа. Моя мечта - модельный бизнес, но очень своеобразный. Вот недавно были сделаны фотографии (правда, любительским фотоаппаратом), о публикации которых я хотела бы

«Зубры» вынайшлі новую форму вэрбоўкі: замест учорашняга «Он должен уйти» сёньня актуальна «Иди ко мне, милый»

Настальгія замучыла

«При слове «Бобруйск» общество блаженно застонало: Бобруйск считался высококультурным местом».

У гэтым годзе дзьве тысячы амэрыканскіх габрэяў зьбіраюцца зьдзейсьніць паломніцтва ў Беларусь, пераважна Валожын, Мір, Радунь, Слонім, Віцебск, Наваградак ды й іншыя культурныя месцы. Вось толькі горад Бабруйск дзіўным чынам выпаў з гэтага сьпісу.
У сваю чаргу арганізатары хаджу сьцьвярджаюць, што ў Беларусі «былі і захаваліся сынагогі, школы па падрыхтоўцы праваднікаў, а таксама магілы знакамітых рабінаў», і таму нашая краіна мае вялікае значэньне для сусьветнага габрэйства.
«Вядома ж! – скажа які-небудзь філёзаф-антысэміт. – Большасьць з эмігрантаў, якія зьехалі з былой БССР, скалаціл тут першы капітал, займаючыся спэкуляцыямі на садавінагароднінавых базах ды ў крамах». А потым пачне падбухторваць моладзь ісьці на вакзал сустракаць ды адпраўляць іх назад. Гэтак і да габрэйскіх пагромаў недалёка.
А што, калі паглядзець на дадзены факт зь іншага боку. Як вядома, кожны турыст з далёкага замежжа за час знаходжаньня на тэрыторыі Беларусі пакідае ў дзяржаўную кішэню каля 700-800. Такім чынам гэткае паломніцтва будзе спрыяць разьвіцьцю турыстычнага бізнэсу ў Беларусі і прынясе не малы дадатак да бюджэту. Так што гарадзкім уладам вышэй пералічаных гарадоў трэба хутчэй наладжваць адпаведную інфраструктуру ды хлебам-сольлю сустракаць дарагіх гасьцей.

Picture 3

Belarusian Anarchism after *Navinki* – Militant and Nationalist Tendencies

The political outcomes that came out of *Navinki* and Čyrvony Žond were far from successful ones. The anarchist movement after *Navinki* had, for the most part, a completely different attitude to politics. To be sure, Belarusian anarchism during the time of *Navinki* and afterward has included some of the more or less "usual" movements or initiatives (like Indymedia, Anarchist Black Cross, Food Not Bombs, and so on) that can also be found outside of Belarus. But such non-orthodox movements as militant-anarchism[39] or ethno-anarchism also appeared. Although the last two groups were not considered to be anarchists by the other anarchist movements, I still think it is important to examine them here as they were a big phenomenon on the Belarusian underground political scene in the mid-2010s. Also, as we will see later, Belarusian anarchism after *Navinki* was far from unified and many anarchist groups did not recognize other anarchist's groups as "anarchist".

On the website of the group Revolucionnoe deistvie (Revolutionary Action), which are successors to the militant anarchism movement, we can find excerpts from the original manifesto of Belarusian militant anarchism that was published in the second half of the 2000s. In these quotes, we can see that militant-anarchism is strictly opposed to the humorous attitude of Čyrvony Žond as it contained such tenets (even the concept of "tenet" seemed suspicious to those involved in *Navinki*) as the "propagandizing of social anarchism instead of the Western-type subcultural and hippie anarchism", the "propagandizing of sports and healthy lifestyle in the anarchistic environment", the "changing of the image of anarchism in social conscience to be more positive and combative", the "formation of a strong backbone of activists to participate in direct actions and public protests".[40] Obviously, these militant-anarchists knew about the activities of *Navinki* and Čyrvony Žond and chose to act in a completely different manner. "Direct actions" in the militant-anarchist's understanding did not just mean to participate in rallies and protests, but also in some violent actions. In the period of 2009–2010 there were some "symbolic attacks" with Molotov cocktails on some buildings in Belarus that were recorded on video and posted on some Belarusian anarchist websites. Finally, in 2011, five people from the militant-anarchist circles were sentenced to prison terms ranging from one and a half to eight years.[41] Also, during the investigation, police questioned and sentenced around 50 people who were close to the anarchists, which meant that the movement itself, after such attention from the state, was almost destroyed.

[39] "Militant-anarhizm. Repressii protiv belorusskih anarhistov: rezuľtaty, pričiny, vyvody" [Militant anarchism. Repressions against Belarusian anarchists: results, causes, conclusions], *XAVTNMX*, November 03, 2013, https://xavtnmx.noblogs.org/post/2013/11/03/militant/.

[40] "Istoriâ RD" [The history of "RA"], Revbel.org., accessed January 16, 2023, http://revbel.org/istoriya-rd/

[41] "Kratkij analitičeskij obzor po 'delu belorusskih anarhistov" [Brief analytical review on the "case of Belarusian anarchists"], *Spring-96*, June 01, 2011, https://spring96.org/ru/news/43724.

The so-called "anarcho-nationalism" movement appeared in Belarus after Euromaidan in Kyiv in 2013. In Ukraine, at this time, groups started to appear that mixed the ideas of libertarian anarchism with nationalism. The most famous among these groups was probably Avtonomny Opir (Autonomous Resistance). In an interview, one of the members of this group said that they were "trying to destroy the dichotomy between the left and the right".[42] During this period, some communities and websites of Belarusian anarcho-nationalists started to appear on the internet.[43] Also, the creation of a new rock-band, Brutto, by the famous Belarusian rock singer Siarhiej Michalok had a big impact for this movement. Some of the public figures associated with anarcho-nationalist movements were recruited to the band as public supporters, and sometimes even as singers. The band had a great success in post-Maidan Ukraine and their lyrics focused on questions of national liberation, but with a militant attitude. The most famous outcome of the activities of Belarusian anarcho-nationalists was a criminal investigation of the people who had made graffiti in Minsk with the words "Belarus must be Belarusian" and which featured a crossed out swastika and hammer and sickle. In the end, those who had made the graffiti were only fined by the court.[44] Certainly, Belarusian anarchism is not monolithic and some anarchist groups inside Belarus do not consider anarcho-nationalists or militant-anarchists to be anarchists.[45] These internal disputes go beyond the topic of the paper, but militant and national anarchists were the most visible representatives of the movement who, in their activities, negated the experience of *Navinki* and Čyrvony Žond.

So, for the most part, the development of Belarusian anarchism after the closing of *Navinki* can be seen as a cancellation of the principles of Čyrvony Žond. Instead of making fun of Belarusian politics and instigating the detournement of Belarusian culture, the newly formed groups were much more serious and oriented toward direct actions. Belarusian artist Uladzisaŭ Bochan is probably the one example of a local

[42] "Čto takoe levyj nacionalizm? Interv'û s byvšim učastnikom ukrainskoj organizacii «Avtonomnyj Opir»" [What is left nationalism? Interview with a former member of the Ukrainian organization „Autonomous Opir"], *Situation* September 02, 2021, https://situazion.info/2021/09/02/%D1%87%D1%82%D0%BE-%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B5-%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B2%D1%8B%D0%B9-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BC-%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B2%D1%8C%D1%8E/.

[43] *Sajt Belaruskih Autanomnyh Nacyânalistaŭ* [Site of Autonomous Belarusian nationalists], accessed January 16, 2023, https://autanomns.wordpress.com/.

[44] "'Delo graffitistov' zakončilos' štrafami" ["Graffiti case" ended with fines], *Euroradio*, January 29, 2016, https://euroradio.fm/prigovor-po-delu-graffitistov-shtrafy-ot-63-do-105-mln-rubley.

[45] "Otvet na stat'u Našej Nivy ob anarhistah" [The response to the article of Nasha Niva about anarchists], *Pramen*, March 29, 2017, https://pramen.io/ru/2017/03/otvet-na-statyu-nashej-nivy-ob-anarhistah/.

anarchist activist who brings a humorous attitude in his pranks against the Belarusian and Russian states.[46] He also had some connections with the people from *Navinki*.

If during the time of *Navinki* anarchists were rarely persecuted by the Belarusian state, afterwards they became one of the most repressed groups in Belarus. The tactics of satire and mocking were not as dangerous for Belarusian anarchism as were direct actions and graffiti. Finally, after the Belarusian protests of 2020, a new wave of repression was unleashed in Belarus. Anarchists were among those who got the longest jail sentences, the longest sentence, twenty years, was handed out to Ihar Alinievič (who was also sent to jail in connection with the case of the militant-anarchists in 2010).[47]

Navinki was successful as media – it was hugely popular and discussed everywhere. The shutting down of the newspaper happened in short order in 2003 as it received three official cautions from the Ministry of Information, meaning according to Belorussian law that it must be closed.[48] *Navinki* did not however simply disappear – its first reincarnation was as a magazine with the same name. But the editorial team published only four issues between 2003 and 2006, and in 2004 it got an official warning from the Minister of Information. *Navinki* also made a couple of movies during this time. The first one was called *Slučaj z pacanom* (It Happens with the Lad) that was directed in Minsk by the Russian director Sergey Loban. Loban has become famous in Russia since that time for his movies *Pyl* (Dust) and *Chapiteau Show*. In 2004, *Navinki* released the movie *Alexandriya Shklouskaya*, but it was a detourned version of the Belarusian movie *Anastasiya Sluckaya*. They simply recorded their own soundtrack over the film's original one with the idea of creating a parody, as their new title and hero alluded in some regards to Aliaksandr Lukašenka (who originally came from a town called Škloŭ).

[46] Anton Mardilovič, "'Plemâ krivičej napalo na Drevnij Egipet, i načalas' Pervaâ mirovaâ vojna': akcionist Vladislav Bohan — ob iskusstve, politike i rabote škol'nogo učitelâ istorii" ["The Krivichi tribe attacked Ancient Egypt, and the First World War began": Actionist Vladislav Bokhan – about art, politics and the work of a school history teacher], *Mediazona.by,* June 28, 2021, https://mediazona.by/article/2022/06/28/Bohan.

[47] "Rekordnye prigovory: belorusskie anarhisty polučili sroki ot 18 do 20 let kolonii" [Record sentences: Belarusian anarchists received terms from 18 to 20 years in prison], *RFI*, December 12, 2021, https://www.rfi.fr/ru/%D0%B2-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B5/20211222-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B4%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%8B-%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%85%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8B-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D1%81%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D1%82-18-%D0%B4%D0%BE-20-%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%82-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8.

[48] "Gazeta 'Navinki' presleduetsâ za satiru na Lukašenko" [Newspaper "Navinki" is persecuted for satire on Lukashenka], 1917.com, accessed January 16, 2023, http://www.1917.com/International/Belorus/1053972822.html.

The next movie was called *Good Bye Batska* (Good Bye Dad) which follows the plotline of the famous 2003 German film *Good Bye Lenin*, but transfers the events to Belarus. The main hero in the film tries, after the fall of Lukašenka, to arrange the media world around his father to make it appear as though the political situation in Belarus had not changed; thus, the mother of the protagonist in *Good Bye Lenin* becomes the father in *Good Bye Batska*, who has recovered from an alcoholic coma. Actually, Batska (The Dad) has a double meaning, because it is also Lukašenka's nickname. This movie was released in 2006. *Navinki* was also shooting a movie about zombies,[49] but never released it. In addition, in 2011 they released a movie called *Introduction to Belarusology* that was a parody on educational movies on the topic of Belarusian nature and people. Finally, the last reincarnation of *Navinki* was the website navinki.today, which was working from 2016 to 2018 and used the same "political-cultural jamming" as the original newspaper.

After *Navinki* was shut down, Pauliuk Kanavaĺčyk printed another newspaper which was distributed in Belarusian bars and restaurants under the name *Pivnaya Gazeta* (Beer's Newspaper). In 2009–2011 he published nine issues of the newspaper, after which it was closed.[50] Another co-founder, Alieh Novikaŭ, released a couple of satirical books that contained short stories published in different Belarusian newspapers. Also, Kanavaĺčyk and Novikaŭ, as well as some others involved with *Navinki* in the mid-2000s, joined the Belarusian Green party. Novikaŭ was even elected its chair a couple of times. With the influx of members from *Navinki*, the party even published a couple of issues of its own satirical newspaper, called *Mirny atom* (The Peaceful Atom). The most vivid example of the party's satirical activity was the nomination of a homeless person for the presidential election in 2015. At that time, Lukašenka's government had tried to invent a new special tax "on the unemployed,"[51] so the motto of their campaign was "We will employ a parasite together" (in the position of president of Belarus). In the end, the State Central Election Committee did not accept the candidate's registration documents and, afterwards, Kanavaĺčyk and the party's candidate for President, Juryj Šuĺhan, had some troubles with the Belarusian Police because they were accused of "public drunkeness".[52]

[49] Ruslan Gorbačev, "Na pervyh porah nas daže obzyvali agentami KGB" [At first we were even called KGB agents], *Salidarnasc',* September 17, 2015, https://gazetaby.com/post/na-pervyx-po-rax-nas-dazhe-obzyvali-agentami-kgb/101094.

[50] Gorbačev, "Na pervyh porah nas daže obzyvali agentami KGB".

[51] Nataliya Gray and David Cameron, "Fighting Unemployment the Soviet Way: Belarus' Law against Social Parasites", *Eastern European Economics* 57, no. 6 (2019), pp. 503–523.

[52] "Potencial'nogo kandidata v prezidenty Ûriâ Šul'gana budut sudit' "[Yury Shulgan, a potential presidential candidate, is on trial], *Spring-96*, July 17, 2015, accessed January 16, 2023, https://spring96.org/ru/news/78491.

Conclusions

Navinki used detournement to show "spectacle" in Belarusian politics in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For Čyrvony Žond, the official Belarusian state power and the democratic opposition were both the same side of the coin – before *Navinki*, criticism of the opposition could barely be found in the independent media. Unfortunately, since the disappearance of *Navinki* this tendency has reestablished itself – the opposition is rarely the subject of satire from the independent Belarusian media. This attitude of *Navinki* was their specific means of political struggle. It is impossible to deduce the specific branch of anarchistic theory used by Čyrvony Žond. Their theory utilized the practice of mocking and making fun of the political system of Belarus. By this time, Belarus already had a stable media infrastructure (both oppositional and State-owned). I mean by this that were stable images of and narratives on how to represent politics. *Navinki* shook this up by using the elements of this already stable mediascape to burst it open from within. The newspaper's stories mixed political subjects (as international in scope as domestic) with stereotypical narratives of the Belarusian media of those times. This mix I would like to call a specific "political-cultural" jamming and in it we can see the specific method of detournement used by *Navinki*.

The existence of such a newspaper was only possible in Belarus during the 1990s. Lukašenka's regime has been increasing repression against independent media over time, so starting a newspaper in the 2010s is not as easy as it was in 1999. The satirical approach of the newspaper was inspired by the ideas of Situationism that were influential for Čyrvony Žond. Never before or after in Belarus has there existed any groups or media who articulated themselves as being anarchists and used the ideas of Debord and other members of the Situationist International. Besides this obvious "Western" influence, the authors of *Navinki* in their materials also gave expression to their specific Soviet and Belarusian cultural backgrounds. This mostly worked on the level of content, but it was also influenced by form. For example, a style of socialist realism (that needed its own "other" in the form of Western imperialism or inner enemies) had been continued in the Belarusian media that also gave birth to specific media-genres (for example, reports that reveal conspiracy theories about the West or internal agents of West[53]). But, in its use by *Navinki*, this socialist realism must be understood as a specific form of content that also presupposes satire on this form itself. I mean that the conscious use of some of the clichés of socialist realism that were popular in the state media was a conceptual satire of these media by *Navinki*. The newspaper happily used this Soviet and Belarusian "template" in their "detourned" materials; there were many different "conspiracy reports" to be found in its pages. And, certainly, the newspaper

[53] Stefanie Ortman and John Heathershaw, "Conspiracy Theories in the Post-Soviet Space", *The Russian Review* 71, no. 4 (2012), pp. 551–564.

was unique in its mocking of both the Belarusian state and the national-democratic opposition, an approach that has been as inconceivable in the state-owned media as it has been in the independent media during the whole time of Belarusian independence.

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ESSAYS

THE CRITICAL POTENTIAL OF ANARCHISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Polish Anarchism during and after 1989

Grzegorz Piotrowski

Abstract

Although anarchism did not play a key role in the 1989 regime transformation in Poland, the development of anarchism in Poland around that time has had far-reaching consequences for the generations of activists that have followed. In this essay, I look at the anarchist movement through a lens that goes beyond the usual analysis of social movements. Learning from the concept of framing, I point to the core meaning of the Polish anarchist movement for mainstream debates: the critical potential of the anarchist movement that is close to the diagnostic framing element of the original concept. This essay presents the formation and crystallization of the movement in times of regime transformation and changing opportunities to act, and the attempts to open up new areas of contention and struggle by reacting to the changing environment in Poland.

Keywords

Poland, anarchism, social movements, transformation, anticommunism

Introduction

The situation of anarchism in Poland for many years was a result of the dynamics of the movement in and around the year 1989. In this essay, I want to point to some of these processes and to show how this influence was exercised in practice. To achieve this, I will adopt an analytical perspective that treats anarchism as a social movement, incorporating tools derived from social movement studies, in particular the concept of framing. I will also show how what lays at the core of the anarchist movement's (relative) success – its critical potential – does not translate equally to its mobilization potential, but affects the public discourse with some latency.

I would like to start this essay by presenting an analytical tool that will allow me to present the particular case of the development of anarchism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Later I will show the development and alterations of the anarchist doctrine after World War II, as this had far more influence on contemporary anarchist activism than classical anarchism. Later, I will be describing the development of anarchism in Poland, which will be divided into two parts: before, and then after, 1989, and I will then wrap these topics up in the final part. What is interesting to observe is the growing importance of anarchist groups and movements at protest events. Images ranging the world from protests accompanying Donald Trump's inauguration, the campaign to save Khimki forest near Moscow, conflicts around gentrification in European cities, to the growing wave of antifascist protests and campaigns worldwide, point to the significance of anarchist movements in mass mobilisations. Anarchists are often the radicalizing core of these mobilizations. In the case of post-Soviet countries (perhaps less in the case of Russia), it is a return to roots, as during the 1980s anarchists were often radicalizing anti-Communist protests in Central Europe. Now they are often behind current mobilizations against far-right groups or new policies of the government that are introducing new laws on surveillance and the like, and that are undermining democratic principles leading towards "illiberal democracies".

What is the Framing of the Anarchist Movement?

There are a number of ways to approach anarchism methodologically. One can look at it as a historical phenomenon; as a philosophical tradition; and as a political actor. This essay is based on the literature concerning movements' identity formations and focuses on framing efforts. As social movements and protests are seen as an unconventional form of doing politics, radical social movements are somehow a problematic case, sometimes following the notion of "deviant" political behaviour.

Developed in the mid-1970s, frame theory came to be used to clarify the reasons for mobilization that could not be explained by organizational theory or structural approaches, which included the cultural factor in the mobilization process. For Benford and Snow, who studied organizations that formed social movements in the 1980s, the key issue became capturing the strategic resources of social movements, especially

their potential to recruit new activists and transform bystanders into politically engaged people.[1] In order to do this, movements need to frame problematic issues, frame the offered solution to the problem, and frame messages that might mobilize people. Here the frame is the most general term, being a cognitive schema held individually or collectively that channels behaviour by enabling social movement participants to locate, perceive, and label occurrences, and indicates to the participants what is going on. Framing perspective focuses attention on the meaning and the processes of interpretation through which movement-relevant meanings are generated, discussed, accepted or rejected, spread, and changed.

Framing processes are designated at the most general level: the interpretive work is engaged in by movement actors and other relevant parties. The results of this are collective action frames, which are action-orientated sets of beliefs that focus attention by punctuating or specifying what in our sensual field is relevant or irrelevant. When they are used strategically, they are intended to activate adherents, transform bystanders into supporters, exact concessions from targets, and demobilize antagonists.

By referring to the sociological concept of framing, I would like to point out the three main elements, which are the diagnostic element, the prognostic element, and the mobilizing element. In the context of anarchist doctrine, those three elements have not developed at an equal pace, with the diagnosis of societal problems being the most developed and most wide spread part of the contemporary energies doctrine; however, with the other two elements of framing there are still some observable developments. The process of framing serves three main aims (or functions), which are (1) the diagnosis of the current situation; (2) the prognosis, or suggesting solutions to recognized problems; and (3) the motivation and engaging of people into action. For the purpose of studying social movements, the focus of attention should be devoted to the macro level of framing, which is the interpretation and adjustment of existing frames, and the creation of new ones by the key activists in the movements (or the movement's entrepreneurs, to use the original terminology).

The Rebirth of Anarchism after World War II

The anarchist way of thinking was well-established by the end of World War I and can be described as possessing anti-authoritarian attitudes, suspicion towards all forms of power and domination, and utopian views. "Anarchists all over the world began to develop theories and practices that, while diverse, were centered around certain basic points: 1) opposition to hierarchy; 2) decentralization; 3) commitment to freedom and autonomy; and 4) opposition to the vanguard, as expressed in authoritarian socialist

[1] David A. Snow, Edmund Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation", *American Sociological Review* 51, no.4 (1986), pp. 464–481.

traditions."[2] According to Eduardo Romanos, "anarchism can be identified by its strong commitment to individual freedom and sovereignty, the opposition to any form of oppression, domination and authority, the promotion of voluntary, decentralized and non-hierarchical associations, and the use of forms of direct action that prefigure a freer society with more solidarity and respect for individual self-government".[3]

With the Spanish Civil War being the last episode of classic anarchism, the revival of this doctrine that began in the 1950s has marked a new era in defining what anarchism is. These changes can be linked to the shift from the old social movements to the new social movements, an interpretation that became more broadly used in the 1970s and 1980s. The experiments with returning to the anarchist doctrine by countercultural social movements in the 1950s, '60s, and in the '70s have revealed a very important component of what anarchism is – that is, its critical potential.

The development of anarchist doctrine embedded in and used by social movements overlapped with philosophical discussions about power and its relations to subjects and societies. Post-WWII anarchism and its critical potential have focused less on society as a mass, but more on the individual level, generating a plethora of various anarchisms focused on individualism. The writings of Michel Foucault, and in particular his concept of biopower, have had a significant impact on contemporary anarchist doctrine.

The revival of anarchism coincides with the growing discontent with traditional leftist parties and political establishment in general. Key factors here were the development of the Italian Autonomia Operaia, the German Autonomen, and the decline of Franco's dictatorship in mid-1970s. One of the turning points was the events of May 1968 in Paris and the role of the Situationists within them. During this time, anarchism connected to the radical antiracism(s) and feminism(s) together with the more classical criticism of work in and of itself, which challenged the classical working class politics. Eric Kerl sees the reason for this development in anarchism's inability to adapt to modern times: "The failure of anarchism to convincingly offer a coherent strategy for fighting oppression meant that many turned to variants of identity politics. Rather than a unified movement, this resulted in an increasingly disjointed residue of identity-based anarchisms; green anarchism, anarcha-feminism, anarchist people of color, queer anarchism, etc.[4]"

Williams – referring to Graeber's Fragments on Anarchist Anthropology – argues: "some anarchistic ideals are nowadays crucial to the movement, especially in terms

[2] Randall Amster et al., ed., *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* (Routledge, 2009), p. 3.

[3] Eduardo Romanos, "Anarchism", in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans, and Doug McAdam (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2023).

[4] Eric Kerl, "Contemporary Anarchism", *International Socialist Review*, no. 72 (2010), accessed February 11, 2024, https://isreview.org/issue/72/contemporary-anarchism/.

of organizational forms and the avoidance of theory and the stress of practice. Therefore such things as small scale groups, federalism, direct action, direct democracy, autonomy, equality and rights became fundamental for the movement."[5] The focus on the organization and practices is reflected in the literature (especially anthropological), and also used by many researchers, who indicate that the solutions taken by the movement's activists are not necessarily the most effective ones, but are in accordance with their principles.

Similarly, Jeffrey Juris emphasizes that in today's movement the term anarchism has a slightly different meaning, "[...] emerging social subjectivities are not necessarily identical to anarchism in the strict ideological sense. Rather, they share specific cultural affinities revolving around the values associated with the network as an emerging political and cultural ideal: open access, the free circulation of information, self-management, and coordination based on diversity and autonomy."[6] These are the concepts that Day[7] defines as "post anarchist currents" in the newest social movements. In that sense, organizational practices and tactics are more important than the ideological content of the classic anarchist doctrine, although they originate from, and refer to, this line of thinking. Kropotkin's concept of a society constructed as an interwoven network of a multitude of organizations and federations seems – from today's perspective – an anticipation of the early 21st century mode of the activists' organizational framework.

Therefore, the concepts of DIY (Do It Yourself), affinity groups, self-governance, and consensus-based decision making originated from anarchist groups and thinkers. "Within the broad reaches of the anti-globalization movement itself, there was also a diffuse, but nonetheless real, feeling that anarchism was in the air once again as a political philosophy and guide to action. For Barbara Epstein, it is more of an anarchist 'sensibility' than a fully-fledged anarchist program we are talking about."[8] This is a result of referring perhaps more to the "lifestyle anarchism" proposed by Bookchin, being a conglomeration of the old anarchist ideology of the 19th century and the punk-based DIY ideology. For Barbara Epstein, "anarchism means a decentralized organizational structure, based on affinity groups that work together on an ad hoc basis, and decision-making by consensus. It also means egalitarianism; opposition to all hierarchies;

[5] Rhys H. Williams, "The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action: Constraints, Opportunities, and the Symbolic Life of Social Movements", in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (London: Blackwell, 2005), p. 14.

[6] Jeffrey S. Juris, *Networking Futures: The Movements against Corporate Globalization* (Duke University Press, 2008), p. 16.

[7] Richard Day, *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

[8] Ronaldo Munck, *Globalization and Contestation: The New Great Counter-Movement*, (Routledge, 2006), p. 71.

suspicion of authority, especially that of the state; and commitment to living according to one's values."[9] It influences not only the grassroots structure of the movement and affinity groups-based manner of collective action, but also the opposition to any forms of hierarchy, both within the movement and in the outside world. "It is an anarchism that takes on board much of the Marxist analysis of the nature of the global capitalism and the anti-corporate movement's emphasis on consumerism. These are not Bakuninists or Proudhonists with clear ideological and programmatic commitments."[10]

The lack of or small number of references to the anarchistic "classics" suggests that the anarchism the activists believe in and share is not a direct continuation of the 19th century line of thought; it is often derived from other sources. Therefore, some of the observers tend to use the term post-anarchism to describe these ideals. Anarchists, whose ideas range from the anarchistic individualism of the situationists to anarcho-syndicalism, dominated in the end the alterglobalist movement.

Resurgence of Anarchism in the "Other Europe"

After the end of WWII, the anarchist movement in Central and Eastern Europe became absent, despite some small and local attempts to revitalize the pre-war movement, known today only by enthusiasts of the history of the alternative left. The dominant political philosophy became the Marxist-Leninist version of leftism. Due to the complicated history of the region, the re-emergence of anarchist thought is dated much later, to the early 1980s. This was a result of the struggle against communist totalitarian regimes, and at the same time an outcome of internal struggles for creating a response to the main (liberal) current within CEE dissidents. It also attracted a different age cohort – mostly young people, with a different approach to politics. Equally important for the argument presented here is the impact of the origins of the anarchist movement at the time of its revival in the 1980s. The context in which the modern anarchist movement reappeared in Poland influenced the process of its identity formation and the perception of the movement's history and its relation to current affairs. Despite the local histories of anarchism during the communist regimes, anarchists – due to their pursuit of freedom and individuality, and their suspicion towards any authority – could not fit into the socialist system, even though the ideas of cooperativism were largely incorporated into it. Hence, until the late 1970s there were only few anarchist activists in the region.

Anarchism in the Central European context is interpreted as a youth movement. In the past, the body of research on youth movements grew, adding to the literature on the fall of communism and regime transformation. This growth allowed for the discussion

[9] Barbara Epstein, "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement", *Monthly Review* 53, no 4 (2001), https://monthlyreview.org/2001/09/01/anarchism-and-the-anti-globalization-movement/.

[10] Munck, *Globalization and contestation,* p. 71.

of groups other than those within the already well-described, more mainstream opposition. A majority of the works available today are monographs of particular groups that represent various strains of anti-communist youth opposition, such as, for instance, the environmental movement.[11]

Apart from studies focusing on particular social movements, there are attempts to describe the countercultural environment in communist countries; the focus of such research is not on the political aspect of the activism but rather on its counter- or sub-cultural roots like the research that focuses on particular music genres[12] or music festivals, punk in particular.[13] There are books and other materials produced by former activists, sometimes in the form of memoirs[14] or edited volumes.[15] Books and other materials have also been devoted to the discussion of specific tools used by a certain movement, such as graffiti.[16]

Looking at the history of the anarchist movement, and the whole youth opposition in general, one of the key events was the imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981. This coup d'état caused the disintegration of Solidarity's structures and the collapse of the dreams of freedom for the majority of the Polish society. In turn, it created a kind of political emptiness that youth groups began to fill. Additionally, youth groups began to raise other demands than those put forward by Solidarity activists, in particular concerning environmental protection and the abolition of compulsory military service. The conservative turn among pro-democratic opposition activists led young people to lean towards a more individualistic understanding of freedom. An expression of such disagreements can be found in issue 8 of the zine *Homek* (one of the first and most important outlets of the emerging anarchist movement, connected to the Movement of Alternative Society from Gdańsk) from December 1983, in which several articles critical of the strategy of the underground leadership of Solidarity appeared:

[11] Tomasz Borewicz, Kacper Szulecki, and Janusz P. Waluszko, *"Bez atomu w naszym domu": protesty antyatomowe w Polsce po 1985 roku* (Gdańsk: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, 2019).

[12] Jan Charvát and Anna Oravcová, *Out of Step: Politics and Subcultures in the Post-Socialist Space* (Praha: Dokořán, 2021); Marta Marciniak, *Transnational Punk Communities in Poland: From Nihilism to Nothing Outside Punk* (London: Lexington Books, 2015).

[13] Grzegorz Piotrowski, "Punk against Communism: The Jarocin Rock Festival and Revolting Youth in 1980s Poland", in: *A European Youth Revolt: European Perspectives on Youth Protest and Social Movements in the 1980s*, ed. Knud Andresen and Bart Steen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 203–216.

[14] Waldermar Fydrych, *Żywoty mężów pomarańczowych* (Kraków: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013).

[15] Dominik Bień et al., *Ruch społeczeństwa alternatywnego: studia i analizy* (Gdańsk: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, 2020).

[16] Ewa Chabros and Grzegorz Kmita, *Graffiti w PRL* (Poznań: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej-Komisja Ścigania przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu. Oddział w Poznaniu, 2011).

> Let's look at ourselves. We sit with folded arms and wait. For what? For the miraculous decision of the TKK,[17] for the "golden horn" [a reference to a Polish poem Wesele by Stanisław Wyspiański, meaning a lost chance] from Wałęsa, who, despite a whole series of irresponsible moves, still enjoys undeniable authority? This is just unacceptable. Lack of any criticism, thoughtless applause to all words, gestures, statements will make even the best ones change. Why should Lech be forced to think carefully about his actions when all that he does he will receive an ovation for?

Polish historian and former militant Marek Wierzbicki distinguishes three periods in the development of the youth opposition in the eighties: a decline in its activity (1981–1984), followed by gradual (1984–1988) and then rapid growth (1988–1990). It is only with reference to the second and third period that the author notices that "the process of gradual emancipation of the youth opposition from the influence of the adult opposition was visible, which was influenced by the weakness of the latter, expressed by, among others, the inability to develop programmes, forms and methods of effective political struggle".[18] It should be noted, however, that youth groups did not develop evenly; for example, anarchist groups were the most active in the first of these periods, while the ecological movement developed best after the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster in 1986, which provided a strong external stimulus to action.

Another important issue was the development of a counterculture and subcultures. The Iron Curtain had never been completely sealed, but since the 1970s, more and more subcultures, fashions, and new ideas (such as deep ecology) penetrated to Poland, encountering increasingly fertile ground. In a manner similar to those of the subcultures, the so-called New Social Movements – unlike traditional social movements, such as trade unions – were characterized by horizontal organizational structures, a loose organizational form, and an innovative repertoire of protests. Interestingly, Solidarność in the beginning situated itself somewhere in-between, with the strong influence of rank-and-file militants and a low level of hierarchy, moving, however, towards a rank-and-file organization throughout the 1980s as it shifted towards more traditional forms of social movements.

Many groups were associated with culture and sub-cultures, and many leaders originated from musical circles, and theatre and film environments. Some activists did not join any organized groups, but belonged to small local collectives that chose specific topics and campaigns. A large group of activists were university students and high

[17] TKK – Temporary Coordination Committee, the body that took over the ruling of Solidarność after it was delegalized by the communist authorities after the Martial Law.

[18] Marek Wierzbicki, *Ostatni bunt. Młodzieżowa opozycja polityczna u schyłku PRL: fakty, konteksty, interpretacje* (Lublin–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, 2013), p. 238.

school students. "People at the age of 15–25 could see the new Freedom and Peace[19] elite. They were fearless, determined and, as you can sometimes hear, seemed to have the best parties. According to some people, this community presented the best that was available in the culture of the late eighties."[20] Youth counterculture was also spreading a bit differently than the pro-democratic, dissident thought of the mainstream opposition. Here a much greater role was played by the sense of belonging to specific subcultures, which – contrary to the limitations of the Polish People's Republic – allowed for the exchange of ideas or experiences.

At the same time the "third cycle" groups that emerged – which were strongly connected to youth subcultures and the counterculture – remained beyond official structures ("first cycle"), but were also critical towards and distanced themselves from the main opposition groups ("second cycle"). Their ideological stands ranged from anarchism (Ruch Społeczeństwa Alternatywnego),[21] pacifism (Wolność i Pokój), and environmentalism, all the way to nationalism (Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej, a group focused on national liberation, occasionally referring to patriotic positions and the history of conservative pre-WWII groups). Occasional cooperation between radical actors from both sides of the ideological barricade took place, receiving the name of "exotic coalitions", in which radical repertoires of action and undisputed anticommunism were the common platform.[22] Such collaboration initiatives peaked in 1989 when anarchists (and other similar groups), together with nationalists, "emptied" (that is, evicted and/or occupied) local offices of the communist party or university buildings (as it was in Wrocław, where each ideological strain occupied "its" own floor). The collaboration accelerated in the second half of the 1980s, partially due to amnesty for political prisoners in 1986, the loosening of repressions, and the growing criticism within and about the dissident sector.

The transition of dissidents towards more conservative positions (especially in the second half of the eighties), and the support of Pope John Paul II, resulted in the creation of many small groups of young people who were critical of the communist authorities as well as of some dissidents who were thought to be eager to compromise with the authorities. Another area of criticism concerned these groups turning to the right of the political scene and their overly close ties to the Catholic Church.[23] For many young

[19] Wolność i Pokój (WiP) was an anarchist-leaning pacifist organization established in 1985 in Podkowa Leśna. Its main goals and aims was the abolishment of compulsory military service, but was active in numerous initiatives, including protests against plans to build the first Polish nuclear power plant.

[20] Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 82.

[21] Movement for Alternative Society, first openly anarchist group in Poland in the described period, established in 1983 in Gdańsk.

[22] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*.

[23] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*.

activists, Solidarity activities were too moderate and ignored some matters (such as mandatory military service and environmental protection – the latter especially visible after the 1986 nuclear power plant disaster in Chernobyl and the prospect of building a nuclear power plant in Poland with the same technology).

Other campaigns and important issues shared with the new social movements were pacifism, which included peace marches (in particular, Easter Marches, a tactic adopted from the German activists), protests against the war in Afghanistan, and the abolition of compulsory military service. Advocacy groups, and those that resisted compulsory military service, such as Freedom and Peace or the Alternative Society Movement, were to attract quite a number of (mainly young) participants. Anarchist activist and author Rafał Górski recalls the times:

> "A new form of protest was organized by the anti-militarist and pacifist-ecological Movement for Freedom and Peace (WiP). The KPN veterans, Solidarity, and a new generation of anarchists and leftists, as well as conservatives and Christian Democrats, several people fasting, tram takeovers for demonstration purposes or attaching themselves to scaffoldings until the police intervened. In 1985, WiP initiated an action to send military books to the Ministry of National Defence and to refuse to take military oaths".[24]

These groups were also far more radical than the main organizations of the pro-democratic opposition: "Freedom and Peace have never sought a settlement with the communists. The group appealed to the regime, demanding a clearly defined change of law, but did so on issues that left no room for compromise."[25]

New social movements emerging in Poland found a way to channel the energy of young people while criticizing certain positions and dissidents. In retaliation, members of youth groups were largely excluded from negotiations at the Round Table. They were accepted only after several weeks of negotiations. From the regime's point of view, they "could not talk seriously with happeners from the Orange Alternative and their followers; with those refusing to fulfil the patriotic duty of military service, with radicals from the so-called Kraków group (militants led by Wojciech Polaczek, the radical WiP wing led by Marek Kurzyniec and others, not only from Kraków, who were developing in an atmosphere of confrontation)".[26] As Krzysztof Brzechczyn writes, "Ruch [Movement

[24] Górski, Rafał, "Opór społeczny w Polsce w latach 1944 -1989 (cz.II)", *Przegląd Anarchistyczny*, June 6, 2009, https://www.rozbrat.org/historia/33-walki-spoleczne-w-polsce/421-opor-spoleczny-w-polsce-w-latach-1944-1989-cz-ii; military books – documents containing crucial information about the military service of the holder, in communist Poland it was almost impossible to get anything done without it.

[25] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution,* p. 74.

[26] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution,* p. 298.

for Alternative Society – G.P.] fought the idea of an agreement with the communists as illusory, and claimed it to be demobilizing the masses. Moreover, it was argued that in the conditions of increasing social inactivity, the new compromise of power with Solidarity did not present any value to the communists."[27]

Padraic Kenney mentions an important distinction used by the Polish activists in the late 1980s between those who were "konkretny" and those who were not. To be "konkretny" in Polish means to be straightforward in the formulation of one's claims, to try to achieve them at (almost) any cost, and that one is less likely to compromise. Such activists were contrasted with the dissidents that were opting for non-violent conflict resolution and were more likely to negotiate with the authorities, the so-called "constructive opposition". This was a result of the bad experiences of the dissidents as a result of previous protests (Budapest 1956, Prague 1968, Gdańsk 1970) that not only included the communist regimes responding with heavy force, but also led to the escalation of violence. According to the dissidents, by acting in a peaceful way, it was easier to discredit the communists and get wider popular support;[28] young activists were less eager to take part in such a game. After martial law was declared in Poland in December 1981, a few splinter groups emerged from Solidarność movements that were more into direct action and had a militant repertoire of action.

During various cycles of protests, when massive mobilizations occur, there are times when actors who differ ideologically decide to cooperate, using the radicalism of their actions and claims as a common platform for collaboration. As mentioned above, this had happened before the transition of 1989, resulting in the "exotic coalitions" mentioned by Kenney.[29] What was common for the anarchist activists from RSA and WiP and with young nationalists of FMW (Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej) was their non-compromising attitude towards the communist authorities and willingness to use physical violence when and where needed (as opposed to moderate actors of the dissident sector who preferred negotiations). In extreme cases, the anarchists and socialists cooperated with right-wingers and even nationalists, for instance in the case mentioned above of the occupation of university buildings at the University of Wrocław in the very late of 1980s. Each of the groups that took part in the protest occupied one floor, which was shown by their banners.

However, anarchistic ideas were not only introduced into the movement through political thought, but also through (the counter) culture. Many music groups had politi-

[27] Krzysztof Brzechczyn, "Myśl polityczna młodzieżowego ruchu anarchistycznego w Polsce w latach osiemdziesiątych XX w.", in Bartłomiej Noszczak, ed., *Życie na przekór. Młodzieżowa kontestacja systemu w ostatniej dekadzie PRL (1980–1989) – nowe tropy i pytania badawcze* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2016), pp. 255–265.

[28] See Peter Ackermann and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful* (New York: Palgrave McMillian 2001).

[29] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution.*

cized lyrics, usually hidden under metaphors, and became icons of the youth movement; they still remain as such for many activists, even those who were too young to be there and remember it first-hand. Urbański characterized this "cultural anarchism" as being "antipolitical, critical towards revolution and revolutionary violence, left anti-theology, and being anti-communist".[30] The importance of this statement becomes clear when we realize that anarchists and anarchy-sympathetic groups were the driving force behind the alterglobalist movement in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 1988, anarchist activists in Gdańsk founded the "Anarchist Inter-city" (*Międzymiastówka Anarchistyczna*, MA), and at a meeting in November 1989 in Warsaw it was transformed into the Anarchist Federation (*Federacja Anarchistyczna*, FA) and became the dominant group in the Polish anarchist movement and incorporated the majority of anarchist currents. Soon after, though, the first divisions within the movement emerged; some groups were eager to continue direct and militant action, while others (connected to the RSA) wanted to focus on local activism. Some of the more active groups evolved into anti-fascist groups, but these were still embedded in the countercultural milieu. Many anarchists were involved in large environmental mobilizations of those times, for instance, against the Żarnowiec and Klempicz nuclear power plants and against the water dam in Czorsztyn.

The mid-to-late 1980s seem to have created a pattern of action for social movements, not only in terms of their repertoire of activities, but also in terms of their position on the scene in relation to mainstream politics.[31] As a result of this process, anarchism over the years has begun to be perceived as elitist and exclusive, which limits its ability to mobilize. This makes it more difficult for it to reach out to potential allies. One of the reasons that account for the problem of positioning Polish anarchists on the left is linked to the history of the movement's re-emergence in the 1980s. The new political elites established after 1989 began to downplay radical groups (such as the PPS) and began to rewrite the history of anti-communist struggles. As Joanna Gwiazda, a famous Solidarność dissident, later conflicted with the rest of the elites of the union, reminisced in the early 1990s about the cooperation with anarchists who were not considered part of the anti-communist struggle because they turned against the newly established governments, elected in the first free elections: "Cooperation with the anarchists was a pure pleasure, because they never treated us instrumentally. They did not expect to make careers for themselves with our help."[32] Anarchists in Poland have been highly

[30] Jarosław Urbański, "Anarchizm – kryzys i transformacja", *Przegląd Anarchistyczny*, no. 9 (2009) p. 100.

[31] Grzegorz Piotrowski and Magnus Wennerhag, "Always against the state?: An Analysis of Polish and Swedish Radical Left-libertarian Activists' Interaction with Institutionalized Politics", *Partecipazione e conflitto* 8, no. 3 (2015), pp. 845–875.

[32] Łukasz Drozda, *Lewactwo: historia dyskursu o polskiej lewicy radykalnej* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Książka i Prasa, 2015) p. 122.

sceptical of cooperation with political parties since the movement's re-emergence, fearing that politicians could build careers on top of their actions. In the gray reality of communist Poland in the 1980s, anarchism became a way for young people in particular to express their leftist ideals and beliefs without having to overtly label themselves as leftists and thus risk being identified with the Communist Party.

The second group of explanations is linked to the movement's re-emergence in the 1980s, when it presented a strong anti-communist stance that was as important as its anti-ethnicism. This influenced the formation of the movement's identity and is a strong part of its modern history. To some extent, this is linked to the dominant discursive opportunity structures, but the movement's formative years had a huge impact on its identity, and the anti-communist attitude of the early activists still lingers in the movement's memory. The final challenge for anarchists was the need to redefine the concept of politicality and move away from political labels. It began in 1980s, and is related to the strong links between anarchism and subcultures and the counterculture, which led activists to distance themselves from dissidents and more formalized politics. On the one hand, this is a reference to the tradition of anti-politics that crystallized among parts of the anti-communist underground in the 1980s, of which the anarchist movement was an important element.

After the Transition of 1989

Almost everything has changed since the transition of 1989. Punk rock had become less and less important culturally over the years though it still had some critical potential, but their critique of the institutional left (especially in its explicit and totalitarian form) was more than clear. As a result, the situation of leftist groups in CEE was radically different than their Western counterparts, mainly because of the history of the region in which communist parties had ruled the countries before 1989. The majority of those parties had changed into social-democratic ones, following the "third way" ideology and becoming part of mainstream politics, many taking part in the governing of CEE countries after 1989. Some radical factions (mostly labelled communist) split from the major groups, but due to laws forbidding any totalitarian propaganda – including communist – they had a limited field to operate within. Certain groups traced their ideology back to the Trotskyite tradition, and others labelled themselves as revolutionary leftists; however, they were outnumbered and often accused of being political plankton without any influence in public debates.

Youth groups are often overlooked in discussions devoted to the Polish path to freedom. The omission results from the fact that, on the one hand, their members did not participate in the Round Table[33] discussions (or because they often criticized them).

[33] These negotiations took place from February to April 1989 between the pro-democratic opposition and the communist authorities and are perceived as a turning point in Poland's road to democracy and independence.

They also played a less important role in creating new governing structures in Poland. On the other hand, their actions (often of a mocking nature, such as was the case with the Situationist-inspired group Orange Alternative) were not always treated seriously. Such a trend was legitimized for many years after 1989. Apart from the generational experience (expressed in formulating goals other than the rest of the opposition), youth opposition activists in the Polish People's Republic introduced new forms of protest, often radicalizing other forms of dissent, such as the strikes that erupted in 1988. In this sense, they radicalized the actions of the opposition (and, importantly, to the dissatisfaction of oppositional leaders), advocating a confrontation with the communists instead of negotiating with them.

These processes lasted until the mid-1990s, with the regime transformation of 1989 playing a key role in the process. For some of the actors, the radicalization meant a further shift to the right, and the appropriating of some actions and extreme concepts that violent subcultures (such as skinheads and other neo-Nazis) used.

One of the main sources of challenges for social movements is the context in which they operate. For Polish anarchists, the most important structural challenge is the socio-political reality of post-socialism; this is a factor that seems to have a stronger influence than in other post-socialist countries, as well as for other types of social movements. This has led to the emergence in mid- to late 1990s of groups that could be called „implicitly leftist": they share leftist ideals and refer to the legacy of workers' movements or the left more broadly, but as a result of their strategic response to certain opportunities (political and discursive) for many years they avoided defining themselves as leftist. Post-socialism is defined here as a combination of economic transformation (the transition from a centrally planned economy to a free market), political transformation (the development of a multi-party system and the establishment of liberal democracy), along with the many consequences of these processes. One of the results of post-socialism, which is central to these considerations and which at the same time is a challenge to radical left and liberation social movements, is the general rejection of "leftism" both in institutionalized politics and in general political discourse, including all forms of leftism associated with a historical memory of state socialism. The communist past is being rewritten and the achievements of this period are being diminished in a process through which most leftist ideas and concepts are directly linked to the communist past. These particular structural conditions regarding political and discursive possibilities thus appear to be the most important elements in the post-socialist context.

The growing dominance of right-wing parties and groups since the mid-2000s has made anti-communism a major part of the discourse, which has resonated particularly well among young people. Most of political parties went towards some form of conservatism: alliances with the Catholic Church were common for a majority of political groups (resulting in the so-called "abortion compromise" of 1993), the number of conservative and right-wing journals and newspapers skyrocketed, and "patriotic

streetwear" came into fashion. In Polish, there are two terms that are used to describe the left wing: "lewicowiec" as a more descriptive and neutral term, and "lewak". The latter was allegedly invented by Lenin to describe currents on the left other than the Bolsheviks.[34] In modern Poland, the term eventually evolved into a slur used by conservatives (and often liberals) to discredit any form of leftist thinking.

Critical Potential

The difference between classical anarchism and its modern counterpart is the primary object of critique. It is, in other words, a question of how the anarchists are defining the powers against which they are struggling. Many of the struggles of 19th and early-20th century anarchists went hand-in-hand with national liberation struggles, and some anarchists saw such liberation as a first step towards more utopian solutions. That was often the case in countries under foreign occupation. The political oppression of the occupied was connected with other kinds of oppression, in particular with the exploitation of the workers and underprivileged classes. Eduardo Romanos wrote: "Historically, anarchists have seen the state as the origin of social problems, a form of centralized, hierarchical social organization which monopolizes violence to exploit workers for the benefit of the bureaucracy and the ruling elite."[35] Anarchists were pointing to the oppression from the capitalists and factory owners and the authorities, particularly monarchies. As Romanos writes: "The state is seen as a solution worse than the problem of violence that it supposedly wants to eliminate, regardless of the form it may adopt, whether liberal or socialist. It produces authoritarian and self-preserving dynamics regardless of who runs it. Anarchists also challenge other institutional forms of authority and domination such as organized religion and the education system."[36] The no-compromise critique of authorities and state power has resonated among many people and as a result more moderate actors decided to meet anarchist demands halfway. What is interesting is that only a few of the positive points of the anarchists have been picked up (mostly cooperativism).

The other group of explanations, specific to the Polish context, is connected to the re-emergence of the movement during the 1980s, when the movement took a strong anti-communist stance that was equally important as being anti-statist. This has impacted on the formation of the movement's identity and is a strong part of its modern history. To some extent, it is connected to the dominant discursive opportunity structures, but the anti-communist approach of the early activists remained in the movement's memory.

In recent years (since around the early 2000s, with the creation of the Inicjatywa Pracownicza trade union in 2002 and the forging of cooperation with tenants' associa-

[34] Drozda, *Lewactwo.*

[35] Romanos, „Anarchism".

[36] Romanos, „Anarchism".

tions), one can observe a deliberate shift within the anarchist movement from lifestyle politics to socio-economic issues (still without labelling itself as leftist). In terms of self-positioning, this has brought nothing new because even previously the stress on lifestyle activism allowed one to avoid labelling oneself as leftist. To some extent, this can be explained with the generational shift within the anarchist movement. For instance, the Polish anarchist movement (and others in the region as well) made a shift towards workers' and tenants' issues, and this signified the shift from sub-cultural anti-politics and prefigurative practices towards activism that became open to new groups and environments, diversification, and specialization of groups. Campaigns supporting anarchist-leaning trade unions, numerous protests at factories, and the strong resistance to re-privatization of communal housing stock (connected to evictions of the current tenants[37]) give supporting evidence for this observation. In this regard, the CEE anarchist movement is taking an ideological position without a clear self-identification on the left-right spectrum. Judging by the movement's practices and targets, one could risk calling them the "implicit radical left".

Today's anarchist activism in CEE (but also in other cases) is not only about criticizing capitalism and the state or even rejecting them, but also about re-defining the political. In this process, the boundaries between the private and public (political) spheres become blurred and vague, as do the labels of "left" and "right". To some extent, this resembles the 1970s feminist claim that "the personal is the political", and evidence supporting this can be found in many places as "lifestyle activism" seems to be more dominant, and numerous aspects of one's life are politicized (a meatless diet, a preference for public transportation and bicycles, and so on). Using the term suggested by John Holloway, they are using anti-power instead of trying to take over power,[38] and thus labels derived from institutionalized politics are less important.

What seems to be a common denominator for the anarchists' presence in contemporary mobilizations, especially in illiberal democracies, is the anarchists' radical democratic agenda. Looking at the core concepts of modern anarchism, it is not only a simple activism against the state. The anarchists' positive program includes calls for radical and direct democracies not only as a political program (call), but also to implement it in their prefigurative praxes. This is visible in the case of coalitions in which anarchists partake. This is seen in the case of cooperation of squatters (mostly anarchist squatters in Central Europe) and tenants' activists that not only are pushing for a more radical political agenda ("right-to-the-city"), but also more direct democratic decision-making processes as well as more horizontal, acephalic organizational principles.

[37] See Dominika Polanska and Grzegorz Piotrowski. "The Transformative Power of Cooperation between Social Movements: Squatting and Tenants' Movements in Poland", *City* 19, no. 2–3 (2015).

[38] John Holloway, "Change the World without Taking Power", *Capital & Class* 29, no. 1 (2005), pp. 39–42.

In this sense any attempts of limiting the space for personal freedoms (which seems to be the case in illiberal democracies), sparks heated responses from the anarchists and increases their potential for coalition-making. The actions of the perpetuators of illiberal democracies are personifying what the anarchists have been fighting against for years: the rise of xenophobic tendencies and more frequent cases of hate speech, and on the side of the authorities growing repression towards activism, surveillance, and the like. What also fuels the anarchist "fire and flame" within these mobilizations is the growing disillusion with liberal ways of dealing with authoritarian tendencies: signing petitions, avoiding direct political statements (under the slogan of "post-politics"), or even treating fascism and anti-fascism as two sides of the same coin and reducing the conflict to a "subcultural clash". In this sense, radical anarchist claims as well as repertoires of actions are making their participation in broader coalitions more desirable and fruitful.

In countries that experienced state socialism, the situation of left-leaning groups is problematic because of anti-communist sentiments in reaction to authoritarian regimes. While the question of leftism in these countries is, to say the least, complicated and deserves a separate study, the question of the political identity and self-definition of a group often associated with the left (usually extreme), such as the anarchist movement, is possible to study. Firstly, there is the question of how characteristic is Polish anarchism as a movement directly referring to the common roots, history, and ideological basis of anarchist movements in other countries. As research from the borderline of sociology and political science shows, anarchist movements are strongly connected with national contexts, in particular with the history and political culture of a given country. In this context, the history of the Polish anarchist movement, and in particular the circumstances of its revival in the 1980s, have left an undeniable mark on its identity. In this perspective, the genealogy of the anarchist movement in Poland will make it possible to answer the question of how specific the approach of Polish anarchists to the question of leftism is. The second issue that needs to be defined is the concept of leftism in general and the question of whether historical definitions of the left-right divide are still useful at all. The third question is the question of the political identity of the social movement: what constitutes the possibility of defining it as leftist or rightist, and whether the issues of self-identification are of an identity and ideological nature, or are they a strategic response to the structural challenges that pile up before social and political movements?

The critical potential is not only particularly visible but also important in the case of anarchist groups in CEE. The capability of an adequate diagnosis (one of the key elements of framing) of the problems and issues stemming from the process of regime transition and transformation, in particular, the recognition and labelling of power struggles and sources of oppression and power relations, has proven to be helpful for the movements, and not only the anarchist ones. Like the 1980s and the peace and

environmental movements, many of the post-1989 movements in CEE were influenced by the critical aspect of anarchist thought and framing, just to mention a few, there is the squatting movement, the radical faction of the trade union movement, the urban movements, and many more. One of the "movement intellectuals" from Poland – Xavier Woliński – has written that if one wants to know what public debates will be held (in Poland) over the next few years, one should go to one of the bigger anarchist meetings, such as *Kongresono*. Social and political problems that are a result of privatization, especially of housing, but also of public resources, public space, and so on, the development and spread of populism, xenophobia and prejudices, were diagnosed by anarchists in a specific way that highlighted the power relations and power sources that were mostly invisible for "the ordinary people". Later these diagnoses were picked up by other movements (sometimes entering into mainstream politics), something that proves the importance of the diagnostic frames of anarchist activism – or, in other words, its critical potential.

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THE HIDDEN ORIGINALITY OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN ANARCHISMS

Let's End with Also-ism

Ondřej Slačálek

Abstract

This essay seeks to challenge the marginal place of Central and Eastern European anarchists in the history of anarchist ideas and movements, which is described as "also-ism" (there were "also" some anarchists in the region). After discussing the contributions of the decolonial and transnational turn, it proposes a regional turn in anarchist studies, evaluating the interactions of anarchist ideas and movements with the broader political cultures of world regions. In the following steps, it proposes the most important determinants for the activities of anarchists in the region (inter-imperiality, the uneven spreading

of anarchist ideas, socialist and post-socialist experiences, and the politicization of art). It ends by identifying five (partial) differences that could be discussed and elaborated upon: a different temporality of classical anarchism, a different role of art, different approaches to the nation and partially to the state, different dynamics in posing questions of freedom and socialism, and different trajectories since the 1980s. It ultimately emphasizes the hybridity that often transformed anarchist ideas in the region into something slightly different – but potentially enriching – for reflection in the context of anarchist studies.
Keywords
anarchist studies, history of anarchism, decolonization, transnational turn, regional turn, Central and Eastern Europe

What can be said about the experiences of anarchist movements in Central and Eastern Europe?[1] Mostly, they are under-reflected in anarchist and syndicalist studies of the last seventy years. It is assumed that there are *also* some anarchisms in the region, but their histories are not relevant for rethinking the overall image. In this essay, I try to challenge this approach and propose ways to think about the experiences of Central and Eastern anarchisms more productively. A more regionalized approach can make it possible not only to integrate one set of experiences of one region into the global history of anarchism. Maybe, it will make possible a more regionally sensitive view of the history of anarchisms for broader use.

Why speak about under-reflection? Let's briefly recapitulate the most important syntheses of anarchist history and ideas. Max Nettlau devoted one chapter in the fifth volume of his monumental history of anarchism to "Die kleineren Bewegungen in Europe", with some details about anarchist movements in Poland, Czechia, and Hungary mostly prior to 1914.[2] In the most standard syntheses, such as that of James Joll, George Woodcock, Peter Marshall, Lucien van der Walt, and Michael Schmidt, we find only a few mentions of our region, or not even this (of course, with the exception of Makhno).[3] Even more contemporary (and from many points of view, innovative and inspiring),

[1] I would like to thank all participants of the Prague workshop "Anarchism in the 'Other Europe'" from September 16–17, 2022, where I discussed some theses that became the basis for this essay. I am especially grateful to Joe Feinberg, Grzegorz Piotrowski, Adrian Tătăran, Hana Blažková, and Matyáš Křížkovský for their comments on various drafts of this text.

[2] Max Nettlau, *Geschichte der Anarchie. Band V. Anarchisten und Syndikalisten, Teil 1* (Vaduz: Topos, 1985), pp. 277–323.

[3] James Joll, *The Anarchists* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964); George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (London: Penguin, 1986); Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana, 1993), and Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press 2009).

the synthetical works of Mike Finn and Zoe Baker continue in this tendency.[4] In the three-volume anthology of the anarchist thought of Robert Graham, there is only one text from our region (a Bulgarian Anarchist Manifesto from 1945).[5]

Ervin Szabó's transition from Marxism to revolutionary syndicalism in Hungary, the Czech anarchist self-organization of miners, and subsequent anarchist participation in government (the first anarchist participation in government, eighteen years before Spain!), as well as the Bulgarian militant movement and its opposition to both right-wing and Stalinist dictatorships are all underrepresented in the narrative of anarchist history. The Polish anarchist and syndicalist movements in the interwar period, as well as the rebirth of anarchist movements at the end of state socialist dictatorships in the whole former Eastern bloc, are mostly only mentioned, not analyzed, in these texts. The adoption of anarchism by the "generation of rebels" of young Czech writers around 1900 is reduced to the story of the globally renowned Jaroslav Hašek and Franz Kafka,[6] while other writers who were much more important to the movement were simply omitted. Thus, we can say that at least some of our regional anarchist experiences are depicted better and with more attention in the mainstream regional history of political thought than in synthesized accounts of anarchist history.[7]

From this trend, two important exceptions exist – Michael Schmidt's book on revolutionary anarchism, and Nick Heath's book on the history of anarchist communism, which cover some important stories of Eastern European anarchism.[8] But also the framework of these two exceptions is focused on global phenomena like revolutionary anarchism and anarchist communism, whose content is mostly pre-defined, limiting the potential to recognize regional theoretical contributions.

Thus, we can describe the prevailing approach towards the Central and Eastern European region as "also-ism". This is a more or less vague idea that in the Central

[4] Mike Finn, *Debating Anarchism: A History of Action, Ideas, and Movements* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

[5] Robert Graham, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume Two: The Emergence of the New Anarchism, 1939–1977*, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume Three: The New Anarchism 1974–2013* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 2004, 2007, 2012).

[6] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 362; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p. 481. In Hašek's case, participation in the movement took a few years; in case of Kafka, there is strong debate as to whether there was any active involvement at all.

[7] Balázs Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe, Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 484–494.

[8] Michael Schmidt, *Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2013) and Nick Heath, *The Idea* (Belfast: Just Books Publishing, 2022).

and Eastern European region there "also" were some anarchists, but their story is an addition that cannot change the general narrative of anarchist history. It deserves to be acknowledged, but not to be very deeply reflected upon as a story on its own, which could also transform the whole picture.

This essay aims to contribute to the end of this approach. To do so, it will situate the rehabilitation of the Central and Eastern European perspective in relation to two of the most important shifts in anarchist and syndicalist studies of the last few decades: (1) the *decolonization* of anarchism and the focus on non-Western anarchisms, and (2) the *transnational turn* in anarchist and syndicalist studies. In dialogue with these two turns, as well as with Piotr Piotrowski, Ágnes Gagyi, and Balázs Trencsényi, this essay will propose another step: a *regional turn.* Then, it will discuss five regional specifics that impacted the development of anarchist ideas and movements. Finally, in the last and more important part of the essay, I will attempt to sketch out five resulting specifics of Central and Eastern European anarchism as possible points of departure for further discussion.

What Could Come after the Decolonial and Transnational Turns? Don't Mourn – Regionalize![9]

Over the past two decades, we have seen two major shifts in the re-examination of the history of anarchism: (1) the decolonizing turn, which has focused on non-Western anarchisms,[10] (2) the transnational turn in anarchist and syndicalist studies.[11] While these turns are stimulating, we in Central and Eastern Europe could integrate our stories into them only to a certain extent.

This is especially the case with the *decolonial turn*. This turn made the stories of non-Western movements much more visible, thus prompting a rethinking of the whole story of global anarchism as a story of the West and Russia (with the important exception of Ukraine during the brief period of the Makhnovist movement). However, we still did not complicate the image of "the West", which is also divided, with some of its parts being not "quite" West, or not as Western as is presumed.[12] In books such as *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940* and

[9] Of course, this is repeated *détournement*. See Andrej Grubačić, *Don't mourn, Balkanize! Essays after Yugoslavia* (New York: PM Press, 2010).

[10] See for example Jason Adams, "Non-Western Anarchisms", *Anarchist Library*, January 20, 2014, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/jason-adams-non-western-anarchisms; Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011) and a special issue of *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, vol. 2021, no. 1 (2021): *The Politics of Indigeneity, Anarchist Praxis, and Decolonization.*

[11] Constance Bantman and Bert Altena, ed., *Reassessing the Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[12] Ivan Kalmar, *White But Not Quite: Central Europe's Illiberal Revolt* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022).

No Gods, No Masters, No Peripheries: Global Anarchisms, the stories of our region are once more missing with one exception – a chapter on the Makhnovist movement.[13] As neither colony nor colonial empire, Central Eastern Europe becomes hardly visible in this empire-colony framework. Even in a world with "no peripheries", the stories of Central and Eastern European anarchism end on a periphery of interest.

It would be quite easy to cultivate a feeling of resentment of having been forgotten, omitted, and excluded from global anarchist history. We could also start to compete for attention with anarchist movements from the Global South. It would be in the best Central and Eastern European culture-political tradition. Competing with the Global South is a favorite hobby of our region, as we have experience especially during the refugee crisis of 2014–2015. Here are three reasons for *not* doing this and for instead promoting the study of Central and Eastern European anarchism in a non-competitive manner and without resentment:

1. The process of the decolonization of anarchist studies is important in itself. It changes the whole image and contributes to more diversified approaches. Also, reconstructed national cases are super important: The histories of mass anarchist movements in Argentina, Mexico, and Korea (and many others) can provide strong lessons for anarchist studies. But beyond the fact that anarchist movements in, let's say, Bulgaria or Poland have also important histories, the deconstruction of Western superiority is an important and enduring contribution to these debates. It does not make any sense to compete with this process. Instead, we should contribute to it – and actually, we can contribute to it. While the decolonizing of anarchism deconstructs the privileged position of "the West", the emphasizing of the "other Europe" perspective deconstructs "the West" itself: as there are parts of Europe that are parts of the West only in a conditional or partial way, it also casts some light on the concept of Westernness.
2. This ignorance of our region is also *our* mutual ignorance: we do not discuss our experience in regional terms. Instead, we most often depict our own national cases and compare them with the "standard image" of anarchism, meaning mostly the West and Russia + the Makhnovist movement in Ukraine. We do not know each other; we have a strong tendency to model "the region" according to our national cases.[14]

[13] Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, ed., *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), Central and Eastern Europe here is represented by one chapter on the Makhnovist movement; Raymond Craib and Barry Maxwell, ed., *No Gods, No Masters, No Peripheries: Global Anarchisms* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015).

[14] Unfortunately, this essay struggles with the same temptation and connected problems due to the very diverse level of knowledge about the various histories of anarchism in our region. Thus, I will focus on Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, and Bulgarian cases and only briefly mention Belarus and Slovakia, without even delving into the former Yugoslavian countries (which probably could be perfect counter-examples against some of my theses), the post-Soviet Ukraine

3. In most cases, it is not only the approach of the researchers, but even more so the approach of the subjects of our research of various anarchist movements who have been heavily influenced by Western and Russian sources. Their debates have taken place within a national framework, rarely producing strong feelings of regional identity (with some notable exceptions that I will discuss later). In many cases, we could follow that huge part of anarchist movements who were much more "Westernized" by their participation in the global anarchist movement, with its transfers of ideas and symbols, than the vast majority of their domestic societies.[15]

Unlike the histories of anarchism in colonized countries, the historical experiences of our region do not provide stories of "great issues" like racial difference, stories of colonization and decolonization, or real mass anarchist movements close to revolution or establishing a dual power (with the exception of Bulgaria). Mostly, they are stories of defeats. Sometimes, those defeats are heroic (like the participation of Polish syndicalists in the Warsaw Uprising[16] or the struggle of Bulgarian anarchists against dictatorships), and sometimes they are unheroic or conversions (like the merger of Czech anarchists with nationalist socialists and later on with communists). However, reflection on these experiences can be our region's contribution. We mostly do not have clear, morally unambiguous, black-and-white, and pure stories. We can bring to the table stories of how anarchist ideas were developed, experienced, and experimented, how they sometimes led to unexpected results, and how they have changed. They are stories of hybridity, of mistakes, and often also stories of failure. However, failures and defeats are a fairly common fate in the history of anarchism, and an analysis of them can be fruitful both analytically and politically.

The *transnational turn* may not foreground important normative topics, such as those of the decolonial turn; however, it poses an equally important epistemological challenge. The focus on the transnational migration of ideas, symbols, and human beings not only promises the productive tracing of the movement but liberates us from methodological nationalism.[17] It also shows how transnationalized (and to some extent: transnationally uniform) the anarchist movement was. There are compelling reasons to look beyond national histories. However, in the contemporary context, when only certain national stories shape the general image of anarchism, it is impossible for historians of Central

and Russia, or the Baltic states. Definitely, the views from these countries would be relevant and probably would correct many views presented in this text. After all, this is a first attempt to provoke debate and formulate introductory theses; it is definitely not an attempt to have the last word.

[15] We can add another practical reason: The ignorance of Western anarchist and syndicalist studies towards our region is also caused by a lack of access to resources concerning the historical experience of anarchism in our region. With a few exceptions, these are still accessible only in the national languages of the region.

[16] Paweł Lew Marek, *Na krawędzi życia: wspomnienia anarchisty 1943–1944* (Kraków: Dab, 2006).

[17] Bantman, Altena, *Reassessing the Transnational Turn*.

and Eastern European anarchist movements to merely jump to the transnational level. Without the groundwork of national cases and their integration into the broader image, which has often been omitted thus far, adopting a transnational perspective could simply mean the continuation of the hegemony of Western national histories by other means. Nevertheless, the transnational perspective is not only a necessary corrective to any versions of national or regional provincialism, but also an indispensable tool for anybody who wants to seriously work on the national or regional level.

Considering the possibilities and limitations of both decolonial and transnational turns, we can see the necessity of the next turn: the *regional turn*. Its contours can be identified by following Piotr Piotrowski and his "alterglobalist" and horizontal move in art history, this turn attempts to practice Dipesh Chakrabarty's call for "provincializing Europe" and considers it to be only one of many global regions.[18] Of course, as Piotrowski knew, we need not only provincialize, but also divide Europe to more completely understand it. Here, we can productively follow authors like Balázs Trencsényi, Diana Mishkova, Michal Kopeček, and others in the research of Central and Eastern European intellectual history,[19] while we cannot forget that the meaningful history of anarchist ideas can be analyzed in relation to anarchist practices.

Reconstructing regional experiences entails retelling the stories of various anarchist movements and ideas in the context of regional influences. Even introducing adopted ideas with (quasi-)universalist aspiration into a specific region means creating a connection between these ideas and the political culture of this specific region, thereby creating something new, such as new hybrids. The history of anarchism cannot be a history of a universal set of ideas and practices, tracing their "spread" and "translation" without focusing on creative and localized forms of reception.

Of course, there are many risks associated with the formulation of regional "differences". Namely, we risk essentializing particular experiences, as well as oversimplifying and reifying the "original" history of Western anarchism, to which regional history is compared (and which can easily lead to omitting the fact that there is no single Western anarchist history, but rather a variety of Western anarchist movements). To avoid these pitfalls, it is essential to engage even more seriously with regional histories and regional comparisons. Also "Western" and "Southern" anarchisms need to be regionalized to be understood better.

Lastly, the regional turn can enable a return to various attempts to envision the region. While I have noted that Central and Eastern European anarchists largely did

[18] Piotr Piotrowski, "From Global to Alter-Globalist Art History", *Teksty Drugie* 2015, no. 1, pp. 112–134; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[19] Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*; Diana Mishkova and Balázs Trencsényi, ed., *European Regions and Boundaries: A Conceptual History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

not produce strong narratives about regional identity, there are also telling exceptions, involving the collective effort of anarchists from throughout the region or its important parts. We should definitely mention the journal *Iztok* (The East, 1979–1991); international anarchist networks and "Neither East nor West" meetings in the 1980s and 1990s; the international anarchist journal *Abolishing Borders from Below* published in the 2000s in Berlin; and the network around Balkan anarchist bookfairs since 2003. Each of them entailed a different concept of region developed in different contexts; their reconstructions and comparisons make it possible to understand what constituted regions in the eyes of various anarchists at various times.

Four Regional Sources of Dynamics

What characteristics of the region can we consider the most important for determining the development of anarchism? What follows are four different characteristics with a long-lasting impact. Of course, they are only partially specific and have many parallels in other regions. But the specific *combination* of these characteristics has produced space for specific experiences of Central and Eastern European anarchisms.

1. Inter-imperiality (and nationalism)

The role of empires in the region is already clearly visible in the process of defining it. Probably the most tempting definition is provided by the term "inter-imperiality": Central and Eastern Europe is the region "in between" four empires: Ottoman, Russian, German, and Habsburg.[20] Competing influences of empires had productive power towards the nations. To some extent, the empires provoked the nations into being and they imprinted many cultural-political legacies into them. Nations attempting to be negations of empire in praxis prolonged many of their characteristics.

By no means was this inter-imperial dynamic exhausted by four directly present empires. Part of this dynamics is also composed by the relationship of the countries of the region towards the Western empires. In many contexts, these core empires (especially French, British, and US empires) can sometimes be understood as "civilized" and "progressive" allies against the "backward" imperialism of regional empires (after 1945, Germany continually became one of those "civilized" and "civilizing" empires). Not only have progressive nationalists from Central and Eastern Europe (from Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, through Adam Michnik up to Volodymyr Zelenskyy) produced some "demand" for Western imperialism, implying its "innocence" in facing local empires and counterbalancing its role in the Global South.[21] This positive valuation of Western

[20] Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, pp. 1–5, cf. Manuela Boatcă and Anca Parvulescu, "Creolizing Transylvania: Notes on Coloniality and Inter-imperiality", *History of the Present* 10, no. 1 (2020), pp. 9–27.

[21] Noam Chomsky depicted this aspect in his criticism of Václav Havel. See Pavel Barša and Ondřej Slačálek, "Regional Imagination between Two Refugee Crises: Emergence and Dissolu-

imperialism leads not only to an acceptance of external imperialism, but also to a kind of self-imposed imperialism, because such figures accept Western empires as models for "civilizing" their societies, taking them as gold standards of universalism, proposing what the Hungarian Wallersteinian sociologist Ágnes Gagyi has called "self-colonizing emancipation".[22] Often, these distant empires are also sources of radical politics or aesthetics, or radical critical epistemology: be it modernist art, world-system theory, alterglobalism, or anarchism. From the West come tools for its criticism, but they must be re-rooted and adapted; otherwise they suffer from being mere imports existing out of context.

Criticizing Western imperialism can be very complicated in this context, as it can be understood as refusing universalist values or complicity with some other empire (previously German or Soviet, now Russian or Chinese). This attitude towards "civilized" and "progressive" empires has of course changed during the course of history, from being a distant role model (before World War I), a new hegemon and ally (after World War I), an official enemy and source of distant utopian fantasies (during the Cold War) up to integration into a (quasi)post-imperial union.

The basic difference between the colonial situation and the Central Eastern European situation is the vector of activity. Both colonized subjects and Central Eastern European subjects struggle for equality, but these struggles are distinct and driven by complex factors, especially by the dynamics of race. This approach transforms the emancipation of Eastern Europeans from local empires into a claim on Whiteness. While non-Western colonized subjects need to abolish white privilege for their emancipation, Central Eastern Europeans have mostly struggled to be fully accepted as European, to receive not only "partial white privilege", but also "full white privilege" (Ivan Kalmar), or their equal share of the "European dividend" (Iveta Jusová).[23] While Central Eastern Europeans are sometimes also racialized as being not fully white (with Slavic and Hungarian being part of an ambiguous not-quite-white category) and sometimes connect their position to that of the underprivileged, the most common vector of "emancipation" leads to confirming, not subverting, the global race order.[24]

tion of Central Europe as the Visegrad Group, 2015–2022", in *Imagining Regions: Hegemony and Emancipation in Europe and Asia*, ed. Olga Lomová and Zora Hesová (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).

[22] Agnes Gagyi, "'Coloniality of Power' in East Central Europe: External Penetration as Internal Force in Post-socialist Hungarian Politics", *Journal of World-Systems Research* 22, no. 2 (2016), pp. 349–372.

[23] Kalmar, *White But Not Quite*; Iveta Jusová, "Situating Czech Identity: Postcolonial Theory and the 'European Dividend'", in *Czech Feminisms: Perspectives on Gender in East Central Europe*, ed. Iveta Jusová and Jiřina Šiklová (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), pp. 29–45.

[24] Kalmar, *White But Not Quite*; Kacper Pobłocki, "How Poles Become White", in: *Halka/Haiti*, ed. Magdalena Moskalewicz (Warszawa, Nowy Jork: Zachęta, Inventory Press), pp. 107–119.

The image would also be incomplete without considering the interaction between nationalism and empires. In some cases, in the context of imperial oppression, the nation may seem to be and practically function as an emancipatory alternative to empire. At the same time, when those potentialities are realized, the dynamics of national competition make the nations behave like small empires (especially before 1945) or the dependent and/or revolting subjects of imperial-driven integration (especially after 1945 and in a very different way and context after 1989).

2. The unequal spreading of anarchist ideas, symbols, and identities

Semi-peripheries and peripheries often have different temporalities from the core. Sometimes, they can simply look like they are "belated" and "catching up". Sometimes, the dynamics of this "catching up" lead to a situation of highly accelerated development, which can also be provoked by other aspects, as depicted by Trotsky and some other authors following him in the idea of "uneven and combined development".[25] Ágnes Gagyi depicts an understanding of the social movement under the post-socialist condition as a "time-space bias": they are viewed with expectations produced by Western cases, which leads to understanding local movements as (often imperfect) copies of the Western original, overlooking the local dynamics and what is important in domestic contexts.[26] This insight can be used to analyze regions beyond the post-socialist period. Histories of anarchism provide a good illustration of such moves. The dynamics of the acceptance, adaptation, and change of anarchist ideas provide many stories of time-space bias.

Anarchism largely did not reach participants in Central and Eastern Europe (or elsewhere) in the form of a "catalogue" of streams, ideas, and tactics from which they could select the most suitable option. Far from it. Rather, thanks especially to the transnational turn in anarchist and syndicalist studies, as well as our empirical research into our various national cases, we can see how contingent, selective, and incidental the contact with anarchist ideas was and how unpredictably the influences worked.

For classical anarchism, the way in which anarchist ideas entered the Central and Eastern Europe context was very important, and this origin had a long-lasting influence. In the Bulgarian and Romanian context, we can trace the original influence of the Russian *narodnik* movement, Bakunin, and also, in the Bulgarian context, Nechayev.[27] In the Hungarian, Czech, Croatian, and Slovenian context, Johan Most's *Freitheit* played

[25] Justin Rosenberg, Jack Brake, Tatiana Pignon, Lucas de Oliveira Paes, ed., *New Directions in Uneven and Combined Development* (London: Routledge, 2022).

[26] Ágnes Gagyi, "Social Movement Studies for East Central Europe?: The Challenge of a Time-Space Bias on Postwar Western Societies", *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics* 1, no. 3 (2015), pp. 16–36.

[27] Adrian Tătăran, "Science Popularization, Print Activism, and Vegetarianism: An Introduction to Classical Anarchism in Romania", in this volume; Ondřej Slačálek, "Stories of Bulgarian Anarchism: An Interview with Yavor Tarinski", in this volume.

an important role as an original source of anarchist ideas (in their terrorist form).[28] In Poland, anarchism developed later on, combining French and German influences with Russian, depending on which part of partitioned Poland is being discussed.[29]

To some extent, there was a strong dependency on the *material means* of transfer of ideas and the level of repression. From smuggled exile journals in the 1880s or later, up to the zines and songs of anarchopunk bands in the 1980s, and later on or to websites, we see many irregularities in the transfers of "messages" depending on their "media".

One of the important research goals of the historical and social-scientifical understanding of anarchist ideas and movements is an analysis of influences and their transformations. Through it, we can find hybridities and variants, as well as "missed meetings" of ideas and practices which could be close but never influenced each other.

3. The socialist and post-socialist experience

Unlike Western Europe and the US, Central and Eastern Europe interacted in a much more intense way, with a successful case of "actually existing socialism" – after 1917, in a nearby country that included parts of the region, and after 1945 inside the majority of the countries in the region. This weakened or interrupted the history of many anarchist movements, either through their members being attracted to Bolshevik "socialism of deed" (in the words of the Czech anarchist and later-on Stalinist Stanislav K. Neumann), or through their participators being brutally suppressed by repressions, as was the case for Bulgarian anarchist communists above all.

The other dynamic was created by the decay and fall of the state socialist dictatorship, which also created space for the reconstruction of the anarchist movement in the ethos of "freedom" and the fresh experience of far-reaching historical change, while it also produced powerful obstacles for anarchism in the form of right-wing neoliberal hegemony and consumerist culture integrating some elements of the anarchizing ethos of "freedom".

4. The politicization of art

Hungarian political thinker István Bibó described the absence of an *independent* intellectual and cultural sphere as one of the long-term shortcomings of Central Eastern European political culture. According to him, any work of art (and science) is "put in the service of national self-documentation" and is not important for its content or

[28] András Bozóki and Miklós Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary: Theory, History, Legacies* (Boulder: Social Science Monograph, and Wayne, N.J.: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2005), pp. 64–66; Václav Tomek, *Ideologie českého anarchismu* (Praha: Academia 1988), pp. 68–86; Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 124.

[29] Radosław Antonów, *Pod czarnym sztandarem: anarchizm w Polsce po 1980 roku* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004), pp. 70–86.

form, but rather for what it represents for the nation.[30] A similar or even connected problem was brought about by socialism; the socialist movement – and subsequently, the communist movement – needed art that educates, propagates, and represents, not art for art's sake. This setting caused many dilemmas for artists with an individualist urge for self-definition and self-realization combined with a will to participate in social struggles and make their own art relevant.

In this context, anarchist artists who are often important participants in at least some movements struggle with their position: often resisting being used by nationalism and simultaneously negotiating their political engagements and independence against *l'art-pour-artism*, as well as against being merely instrumentalized by the anarchist movement.

Five (Partial) Historical Differences

The dynamics described above led to certain historical specificities as the anarchist movement in Central and Eastern Europe developed. I will try to identify five that I consider the most important:

1. Different temporalities I: The classical age

Here we will discuss three aspects of anarchism in its classical age. All three were present also in "metropolitan" and "colonial" anarchism, but I will try to show how a specific mixture of them was provided in Central and Eastern Europe. These aspects include (a) the relationship between anarchism and Social Democracy, which was characterized by a close enmity and the need to find an alternative philosophical basis after splitting with it; (b) the combination of anarchism with spirituality; and (in next section) (c) the role of anarchism in modernist art.

While Spanish, French, Belgian, Swiss, and Italian anarchism trace their origins to the First International and the split between Marx and Bakunin, the majority of Central Eastern European anarchist movements have more recent roots connected with disputes and conflict in the Second International.

For Polish, Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian anarchism, key founding figures were formerly influential members of Social Democracy. As they were an active part of the social democratic milieu in its early phases, when it was still open and uncertain, they eventually started to criticize their original movements and parties and became anarchists (or syndicalists, in the case of Hungary). While the background, ideas, and fates of Edward Abramowski (1868–1918), Vilém Körber (1845–1899), Ervin Szabó (1877–1918), and Panait Mușoiu (1864–1944) were different, they shared some dynamics, which also meant that social democracy was, in all cases, the "intimate enemy" of anarchism.

[30] István Bibó, "The Miseries of East European Small States", in *The Art of Peacemaking: Political Essays by István Bibó*, ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 155.

In all cases, the charisma of former social democratic leaders helped establish the anarchist movement. In all cases, the split with social democracy led not only to a change in political position, but also to a strong change in philosophical approach. Historical materialism, characteristic of the Second International, was partially complemented by and partially replaced by various versions of socialism that accented ethical dimensions, agency, and often also individuality. Mușoiu, originally the first Romanian translator of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* and Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, became the translator not only of Kropotkin, Malatesta, and Grave, but also of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* and *Walden*.[31] The Czech anarchist Vilém Körber formulated an "ethical anarchism" based upon the adoption of individualist anarchism, and later on, he moved to collectivist versions of anarchism. At the same time, he continually (even from his earlier days as a social democratic) defended Proudhonian mutualism and cooperatives as the basis for societal transformation.[32] Similarly, Edward Abramowski of Poland combined an emphasis on individualism with cooperative positions, integrating a Tolstoyan vision, insights of human psychology and the idea of "moral revolution" and of the boycott of the state by an human individual.[33] In Hungary, Ervin Szabó found a different version of ethical socialism in Sorelian syndicalism and ideas of workers' autonomy.[34]

All four authors provided the foundation for the movement. Vilém Körber soon died (partially due to deteriorated health caused by police repression) and was replaced by various authors of the new generation, especially Stanislav K. Neumann (1875–1947) and Karel Vohryzek (1876-1944). They both, after an individualist period, tried to combine an individualist vision of "strong individuals" and their freedom, as defined by Nietzsche and Stirner, with stateless socialism.[35] Abramowski's relationship with the anarchist movement was much looser, but he was active in founding the cooperativist movement. Ervin Szabó, despite being friends and collaborators with some anarchists (namely the anarcho-communist count Ervin Batthyány), chose to found an autonomous syndicalist proletarian organization, influencing young leftist intellectuals like

[31] Tătăran, "Science Popularization, Print Activism, and Vegetarianism".

[32] Čestmír Pelikán, "Svépomoc, radikálové a neodvislý socialismus", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 2024, forthcoming).

[33] Edward Abramowski, *Filozofia społeczna* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965); Zbigniew Krawczyk, *Socjologia Edwarda Abramowskiego* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1965); Andrzej Walicki, *Polska, Rosja, marksizm: studia z dzejów marksizmu i jego recepcji* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1983); Bartłomiej Błesznowski and Cezary Rudnicki, ed., *Metaphysics of Cooperation: Edward Abramowski's Social Philosophy. With a Selection of His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

[34] Bozóki, Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 130–133; *Socialism and Social Science: Selected Writings of Ervin Szabó (1877–1918)* (London: Routledge, 1982).

[35] Václav Tomek, *Český anarchismus, 1890–1925* (Praha: Filosofia 1996).

György Lukács more than workers.[36] While Szabó died only one year before a majority of his intellectual followers turned to Bolshevism and participated in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Panait Mușoiu, as the only one of these four great deserters of the Second International, lived long enough to have the possibility to participate in the founding of the Third International. In contrast to many other anarchists in Romania and elsewhere in the region, he refused to participate and chose to remain a marginal voice, faithful to his concept of anarchist ethical socialism.[37]

At the same time, we see the importance of the position which is even further from the historical materialism of the Second International. In the Hungarian and Bulgarian contexts, we see strong influences from Tolstoyanism. The Hungarian thinker Jenő Henrik Schmitt (1850–1916) combined Tolstoy with Nietzsche and proposed the concept of a spiritually anarchist society connected not to the morality of primitive Christians like Tolstoy but to Gnosticist spirituality, which liberates human beings from any power of authority and advocates for a "religion des Geistes".[38]

While Schmitt can be considered an alternative to Tolstoy, or a "missing link" in spiritual anarchism between Tolstoy and Landauer (he collaborated with both of them), we can also trace the influence of Tolstoy in the region. Especially in Bulgaria, Tolstoyan inspiration led to the founding of a commune in Burgas.[39] Even in the Czech context, where anarchists were quite resolute in attacking Tolstoy and Tolstoyism, we can see the spiritual framing of anarchism. One of the leading figures of early Czech anarchism in the 1890s, František Vladimír Lorenc, combined anarchism with the strong element of pantheist spirituality.[40]

Central and Eastern Europe was also important for the strong presence of Jewish radicalism, often with religious undertones. While this combination of religious radicalism with anarchism developed mostly outside of the region, it had roots in the political, as well as the religious, lives of Jews in the region. The creative thinking of Abba Gordin (1887–1964) reflected both the radicality of his "Anarchist-Universalist" participation in the Russian Revolution and the spirituality of Yiddishland, showing the importance of Judaist imprints in the anarchism of the region.[41]

[36] Bozóki, Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 132–133.

[37] Tătăran, "Science Popularization, Print Activism, and Vegetarianism".

[38] Bozóki, Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 78–99.

[39] Ondřej Slačálek, "Stories of Bulgarian Anarchism: An Interview with Yavor Tarinski", in this volume.

[40] Radek Hylmar, "Český literární anarchismus v souvislostech socialismu a ženského hnutí (1890–1914)" (Ph.D. diss., Praha: Charles University, 2017), pp. 22–27.

[41] Lilian Türk, "Zionism, Monotheism, and the Self: Abba Gordin's Religioanarchist Reading of the Scriptures", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 57, no. 1 (2022), pp. 58–76; Lilian Türk, "Scepticism, Seclusion, and the Self: Correspondences in Religious Anarchist Writings", in *Skepsis and Antipolitics: The Alternative of Gustav Landauer*, ed. Cedric Cohen-Skalli and Libera Pisano (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 297–317.

2. The different roles of artists?

The influence of anarchism on modernist art definitely cannot be considered a different temporality; it emerged at the same time as the same phenomenon in France and elsewhere, and of course, French role models impacted this relationship. Perhaps the difference lies in the intensity of the mutual penetration between anarchism and modernism, especially in Czechia and Hungary.

While some of the most important symbolist poets in France became sympathizers of anarchism, they were not directly engaged in the movement.[42] In Czechia, we can find some of the most important poets of the 1890s and 1900s, namely Stanislav Kostka Neumann, Fráňa Šrámek, and František Gellner, as editors of anarchist journals, anarchist spokespersons and – especially Neumann – the most important intellectuals of the movement. The ideology of the movement was greatly influenced by their aesthetics.[43] Sometimes, this exact connection between anarchism and pathetic lyricism was also considered a hindrance and an inhibition, especially by anarcho-syndicalists who feared that the aesthetic tastes of an artistic minority would overly influence a movement that should be driven by workers. Among the anarcho-syndicalists, this position was expressed especially by prose writers like Karel Vohryzek and Jaroslav Hašek, leading to a struggle between pure anarchism and more practical anarcho-syndicalism in the form of a struggle between prose and poetry.[44]

While in the Czech case, artists played a particularly important role in the movement, in Hungary, artists influenced by anarchism went much further in the connection between ideas and social praxis. Artists influenced by William Morris and other Pre-Raphaelites, as well as by the Christian anarchism of Jenő Henrik Schmitt, founded an artist colony in Gödöllő, where they sought to create new art and effect society.[45]

This aspect remained important also for another generation of the Hungarian avant-garde, especially in the case of Lájos Kassák. We can observe intersections between his art and anarchist ideas, especially in his youth, but also in the 1930s when he connected the idea "change of life" in the collective spirit of smaller circles of students and workers, which he promoted and organized. He still exhibited some influences from this tradition, despite him being more of an etatist socialist then.[46] We can also identify the influence of anarchism on the new generation of the avant-garde in the

[42] Richard D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siecle France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

[43] Ondřej Slačálek, „Neumíme poslouchat, a to je naše ctnost", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 2024, forthcoming).

[44] Ondřej Slačálek, „Neumíme poslouchat, a to je naše ctnost".

[45] Bozóki, Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 95–99.

[46] See Eszter Balázs, "Anarchism and the Avant-garde in Central Europe: Lajos Kassák's Magazines in Budapest during the 1910s" in this volume.

Czech case, when, for example, Nobel Prize winner Jaroslav Seifert, during his youth, was a member of the short-lived anarchist group Association of A-national Students. The surrealists Toyen and Karel Teige also had anarcho-communist roots. Very soon, however, the Czech avant-garde moved from anarchist communism to Bolshevism, following the Czech anarchist movement in this aspect.

3. The different dynamics of national questions (and maybe even the state)

Approaches to nation and nationalism are highly ambivalent in the context of the Central Eastern Europe – and perhaps this makes it similar to the relationship between anarchism and nationalism in some countries of the Global South (as Benedict Anderson put it during the fin-de-siècle period, anarchism was often much more attractive for anti-colonial nationalists than Marxism was).[47] While the anarchists often criticized nationalism, they sometimes also, under imperial pressure, could understand anti-imperialist, democratic, and progressive (sometimes even socialist) nationalism as a better alternative to empires. Sometimes they used anarchist ideas to argue for it; from the Czech case, we know how Stanislav K. Neumann used the "principle of autonomy and federation" to defend national independence.[48]

Thus, both Czech anarchists like Neumann and Polish anarchists like Abramowski supported their nation in World War I.[49] Czech anarchists sided with Piotr Kropotkin and Jean Grave, who saw the Allied Powers as preferable to the Central Powers led by authoritarian Prussia, but they were in a unique position, as *siding with* their nation meant actually *struggling against* the existing empire of which they were citizens.

This dynamic could sometimes lead to ambivalent positions towards the state, which is a crucial topic for the anarchist position. In the Central and Eastern European context, there were often important differences from the Western condition (to some extent similarities with certain Global South contexts). Whereas in Western Europe and North America, strong core states were a reality, anarchists in Central and Eastern Europe under inter-imperial conditions had to consider their stance towards imperial states, as well as towards nation-states, as nationalist fantasies became a reality at some point. The nation-state, as something not yet established and whose existence can be challenged by empire at any time, creates different dynamics for anarchist criticism of the state – sometimes, the nation-state was invested with many societal expectations (which were often illusory) that resulted from anti-imperial struggles in which anarchists took part, complicating their relationship to these states.

[47] Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2006).

[48] Tomek, *Český anarchismus 1890–1925*.

[49] Tomek, *Český anarchismus 1890*–1925; Krawczyk, *Socjologia Edwarda Abramowskiego*, pp. 133–134.

In relation to the state, we can identify two basic strategies. The first one is associated with the experience of the Bulgarian movement. The state was recognized as weak, which provided anarchists a very important chance to attempt to turn their ideals into social practices. Thus, the movement engaged in uprisings and attempts to create some anarchist communist communes, especially in the countryside, which can be considered as an example of dual power.[50] Adopting this strategy, Bulgarian anarchists became objects of harsh state repression.

Unlike them, Czech anarchists had a different approach. As we have seen, they sided with their nation against the Austro-Hungarian Empire during WWI. Already before it, in 1914, anarchist leader Bohuslav Vrbenský proposed a program for Czech anarchists to found an "anarchist communist party", which had a program for the independence of the Czech lands. While Michael Kácha and some others refused the proposal, especially in the form of a political party and also for forgetting about anarchist internationalism, Vrbenský was successful and only the outbreak of the war prevented Czech anarchists from founding a political party. During the war, they merged with Czech democratic national socialists, and after the war, Vrbenský became a minister in the new Czechoslovak government. According to him, only the "ruins of the state" could come from revolution during WWI, not opportunities for constructive socialist work – this was Vrbenský's defense of his position at the congress of Czech anarchists in 1919.[51]

4. Different dynamics in posing questions of freedom and socialism

Some anarchists, under the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution, revised their older criticism of Marxism, which was easier for them, as the Leninist interpretation of Marxism was influenced by some elements of the Russian revolutionary tradition that they shared in their political family tree (Bakunin, Nechayev, Narodnaya Volya, and so on). The process of the Bolshevization of the anarchist milieu was also the case in many other countries, but in Czechia and Hungary, it was especially significant because it meant that the whole anarchist movement ceased to exist. Bolshevization was accepted by Czech and Hungarian anarchists as a lesson of World War I, which pre-war anarchists were powerless to prevent. Lenin's efficiency was understood as a remedy to this powerlessness, while former anarchists believed that Leninism still offered them a space to defend freedom, which, it became clear, was an illusion.

Czech anarchists who joined the Communist Party presented it as an acceptance of "reality" and a departure from the "purest anarchist dream".[52] For many of these former anarchists, the Leninist version of communism offered a continuation of their

[50] Ondřej Slačálek, "Stories of Bulgarian Anarchism: An Interview with Yavor Tarinski", in this volume.

[51] Tomek, *Český anarchismus 1890–1925*, Slačálek, "Neumíme poslouchat, a to je naše ctnost".

[52] Tomek, *Český anarchismus 1890–1925*, Slačálek, "Neumíme poslouchat, a to je naše ctnost".

radicalism combined with some realist aspirations and a touch of real power present in the Soviet Union. We can identify a continuation of anarchism namely in Poland, where the Leninist communist party was not as strong.[53] But the most important alternative we can find was in Bulgaria, where anarchists were strong enough to create their own "reality" of militant anarchist communist politics. The Communist Party crushed them with repression and concentration camps in the 1940s and 1950s.[54]

Still, some elements of anarchism survived and had some influence on criticism of "actually existing socialism". Robert Kalivoda, a Czech Marxist philosopher close to surrealism, recognized in 1968 a "libertarian stream" (present in anarchism and modernist art) as a dialectical counter-balance to Marxism on the common path to a free communism.[55] Edward Abramowski was seen by Piotr Żuk and some other authors as an inspirational source of some streams in the Solidarność movement (especially authors like Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski).[56]

According to András Bozóki and Miklós Sükösd, anarchist influences or parallels in anti-totalitarian dissident thought are more broadly present than previously thought. This connection is associated with the logic of the situation under state socialist dictatorships, as well as dissident thought.[57] Dissident criticism of the destructive effects of power, as well as attempts to find a "third position" between the East and the West, brought dissidents close to anarchists in their problematics. What largely kept them distant from anarchism was anarchist radicalism. As dissident politics can be interpreted as a reaction to the catastrophe caused by (Bolshevik) radicalism, dissidents were mostly very hesitant toward revolutionary radical positions. Parallels between them and anarchism could perhaps serve to further develop the concept of a moderate version of anarchist radicalism and criticism of power.[58]

[53] Cf. Antonów, *Pod czarnym sztandarem*, pp. 98–100.

[54] Alexander Nakov, *The Dossier of Subject No. 1218: A Bulgarian Anarchist's Story* (Alberta: Black Cat Press, 2016); Ondřej Slačálek, "Stories of Bulgarian Anarchism: An Interview with Yavor Tarinski", in this volume.

[55] Robert Kalivoda, *Moderní duchovní skutečnost a marxismus* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1968), pp. 103–148.

[56] Piotr Żuk, "Edward Abramowski's Concept of Stateless Socialism and its Impact on Progressive Social Movements in Poland in the Twentieth Century", *History of European Ideas* 45, no. 2, pp. 64–82. Cf. Andrzej Walicki, *PRL i skok do neoliberalismu, I. Jaruzelski – Solidarność – Zdrada elit* (Warszawa: FOR, Instytut Historii Nauki PAN, 2021), pp. 274–275, 284.

[57] Bozóki, Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 77–101.

[58] An analysis of the intersections and differences between anarchism and dissent, which could perhaps produce a debate about the paradoxical idea of "moderate radicalism", which to some extent can be parallel with Žiga Vodovnik's idea of the missed meeting between anarchism and transcendentalism. See Žiga Vodovnik, *A Living Spirit of Revolt: The Infrapolitics of Anarchism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2013).

5. Different temporality II: The 1980s and beyond

While in the context of Western anarchism the difference between old and new anarchism is often discussed, in the context of CEE anarchism there is a temporal chasm of 40–70 years, often preventing any possibility of personal meetings between these streams and political generations. In the West, the new anarchism was strongly influenced by musical subcultures of youth, especially punk, but it still drew on interactions with older anarchist tendencies that were still living traditions. In CEE, by contract, the subcultural influence was at first much stronger, because the link to living traditions had been cut. Musical scenes provided a cultural basis and identity to the movement, as well as some resources. Subcultural ideologies of "purity" also influenced the political contents of the anarchist movements.[59]

In the Polish and Hungarian context, anarchist movements started to develop as a radical part of the oppositional milieu in the 1980s. In Poland, the struggle against "actually existing socialism" provided the movement with a specific mixture of anti-totalitarian pathos, militancy, a sense of humor, and subcultural anarchist topics.[60] The Orange Alternative group organized happenings and produced manifestos of "socialist surrealism".[61] In Hungary, together with this oppositional subcultural anarchism,[62] we can also find the dissident philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás, who in his samizdat book develops libertarian socialist ideas and declares himself to be continuing the anarchist tradition.[63] Soon, nevertheless, he gravitated towards liberal conservative positions (and later on, after 1989, towards critical Marxism).

In Poland and Hungary, anarchism became a fringe part of the oppositional movement against the late Leninist dictatorship. While it was the same in the Czech case, the first organized anarchist event did not come until October 1989. Anarchism became important after the fall of the regime. In all post-Communist countries, anarchist freedom is attractive for part of the young generation also because it expresses a radicalized version of the spirit of the time: absolute freedom and revolt against any authority, a new "open time" of acceleration, new opportunities, and the search for identity. Often, identification with anarchism did not provide more concrete ideas which needed to be found in the West or in history; from this point of view, Bob Kuřík speaks about "anarchists without anarchism" in the first years after regime change.[64] While in the

[59] Grzegorz Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of the Iron Curtain: Central and Eastern European Alterglobalists* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 153–180.

[60] Grzegorz Piotrowski, "The Critical Potential of Anarchism and Its Consequences – Polish Anarchism during and after 1989", in this volume.

[61] Major Waldemar Fydrych, *Lives of Orange Men* (Wiwenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2014).

[62] Bozóki and Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 179–183.

[63] Bozóki, Sükösd, *Anarchism in Hungary*, pp. 179–182.

[64] Bob Kuřík, „Nevěřte nikomu, ani nám!", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém an-*

new context, class rhetoric was discredited and the new regime was criticized mostly on moral grounds, the influence of subcultures was very strong and many subcultural societies and institutions (squats) became the basis for the movement. Anarchism is also attractive because it is connected with the West and with the legacy of radical criticism of the previous regime.

Bulgaria was the only country where "new anarchists" from the young generation and punk subculture met "old anarchists" with interwar experience participating in a militant anarchist movement and being repressed after 1944. Cooperation between these two generations was of course complicated, given differences in the horizons of generational experience.[65] Some insight into ideas behind this reconstruction of traditional anarchism can be found in the book *Anarchism in the 21st Century* by Georgi Konstantinov (who destroyed a statue of Stalin in 1953 and was imprisoned) published in the 2010s, combining a legacy of classical interwar anarchist communism with an updated version of techno-optimist ideas about the possible move "from robotronic to social revolution".[66]

Especially after 1989, previous criticism of Marxism was an important legitimization of anarchism in new conditions, together with its "Westerness" and connection with Western subcultures. While the Marxist left was mostly delegitimized by the rising liberal hegemony, anarchism was to some extent on the fringe of this liberal hegemony, sharing and radicalizing some values of "freedom". This liberal hegemony at the same time delegitimized the vocabulary important for the social anarchist tradition of anarchism and caused obstacles for the long-term class self-organization, which is an important part of social anarchism. When anarchists used class language, they had to defend it against society; but first they had to find it and defend it for themselves.

In many cases, the new ideology of "civil society" had a strong influence on the anarchist movement. Not only did it shape their closest allies (environmentalist and anti-racist movements), but it also promised some version of politics outside of the state and often also against it. Sometimes, we can observe, as Matyáš Křížkovský did in the Czech case, some hybrids, which he called "civic anarchism".[67] Both milieus were alienated by a more far-reaching utopian vision of anarchists, as well as by the open relationship of some of them towards violence. Especially after the most important part

archismu, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 2024, forthcoming).

[65] Ondřej Slačálek, "Stories of Bulgarian Anarchism: An Interview with Yavor Tarinski", in this volume.

[66] Georgi Konstantinov, *Anarchism in the 21st Century* (Sofia: Free Thought, 2019), https://files.libcom.org/files/Kniga-Georgi-80.pdf.

[67] Matyáš Křížkovský, „Nedej náckům žádnou šanci", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 2024, forthcoming).

of "civil society" moved to NGO-ization and "transactional activism", mutual alienation became much deeper.[68]

While in Central European countries like Poland, Czechia, and Hungary, anarchists developed a criticism of liberal democracies, in post-Soviet countries like Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, they had to face not only a more brutal version of new capitalism, but also, especially in the case of Belarus and Russia, political dictatorship. Especially in the case of Belarus, we can see various tactics and strategies being employed: from a satirical struggle with the rising dictatorship, through critical participation in the broader pro-democratic movement, up to a militant movement with a strongly developed "security culture" facing a regime with violence and tactics drawn from partisan warfare.[69] To some extent, we can recognize some parallels between the Polish anarchist movement of the 1980s and the Belarussian anarchist movement since the 1990s.[70] But the Belarussian anarchist movement had much more time to develop various modes of anarchist activity under a dictatorship with much more effective repression (as is clearly visible especially after the 2020 protests) and with much more gloomy perspectives.

As we have already seen, many political ideas and practices were transferred from the West. While there were also some transfers between various Central and Eastern European countries (for example, from Poland to Czechia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, or from Czechia to Slovakia in the 1990s),[71] the German autonomous scene and some other Western inspirational sources were much better developed and had much to offer. One important inspiration was the practice of squatting, impossible during state socialism and developed especially in huge city centers after the collapse of state socialism. The transfer of squatting struggled with many differences in the post-socialist context; probably the most important was the high level of legitimacy of private property in post-socialism, which often led squatters to choose state-owned buildings.[72] There were also other inspirations, for example, militant anti-fascism.

[68] Tsveta Petrova and Sidney Tarrow, "Transactional and Participatory Activism in the Emerging European Polity: The Puzzle of East Central Europe", *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 1, pp. 74–94; Arnošt Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: radikálně ekologické aktivity v ČR po roce 1989* (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2017).

[69] Pramen, "'When We Rise': A Critical Analysis of the 2020 Revolt against the Dictatorship", June 28, 2021, https://pramen.io/en/2021/06/when-we-rise-a-critical-analysis-of-the-2020-revolt-against-the-dictatorship-brochure; Gleb Koran, "Detournement as Satire in the Belarussian Newspaper *Navinki*", in this volume.

[70] For this insight, I am indebted to Grzegorz Piotrowski. See also Piotrowski, *The Critical Potential of Anarchism and Its Consequences*, in this volume.

[71] Miroslav Michela, *Early 1990s Anarchism in Slovakia: Between Punk Rebellion and Organized Protest*, in this volume.

[72] See *Baltic World* no. 1–2 (2016) on "squatting in the East", especially Arnošt Novák and Michaela Pixová, "Prague Post-1989: Boom, Decline, and Renaissance", *Baltic World* no. 1–2 (2016), pp. 34–45; Dominika V. Polanska, Grzegorz Piotrowski, "Local Differences and the Importance of

Probably the most intense Western influence was on the alter-globalist movement. This entailed a broad diffusion of both ideas and practices, including symbols, ways of self-organizing (affinity groups), and even self-identification.[73] It provided other opportunities for anarchists to develop their criticism of capitalism, while also providing lessons on problems of fluid self-organization without a long-term perspective, ephemerism, and local/quasi-global relationships. While alter-globalism provided space to discuss the problems of the Global South, it was much harder to connect it with situations from the region. Thus, they were also unable to face the general conditions of the region, namely anti-left-wing sentiments and political apathy.[74]

The presence of alter-globalism also encouraged anarcha-feminist activism, challenging some inequalities in the movement. Here, inspiration and resources in both ideas and practices from the West were very helpful for anarcha-feminist activists from the region to challenge invisible hierarchies in local scenes.[75]

The crisis of the liberal consensus after 2008, together with the ebb of the alter-globalist movement, did not make anarchists stronger so much as it led to a revived search for new etatist politics on the left. Especially with the rise of the climate movement, we see a new hybridity: the seriousness of the new danger delegitimizes the notion of following only one strategy, be it etatist or anarchist. Instead, it produces new hybrids. At the same time, the deepness of the problem also radicalizes some parts of the "NGOized" environmentalist movement, moving them from "transactional activism" into more radical protest-oriented politics. Time for new forms of politics is visible, and new forms of direct action and movement participation are developed, often under the strong influence of the anarchist concepts of direct action and self-organization.[76] This influence does not exist in isolation, but rather it mixes with other influences in the movement. The question remains whether this development, which to some extent is characteristic of the entire Western world, has any Central and Eastern European specifics. Answering this question would require a discussion beyond the scope of this essay.

Thus, in many aspects we can see a strong Western influence, mirroring similar trajectories as the movements in Western European countries. However, a crucial distinction arises concerning the condition of interimperiality. On the one hand, it means that anarchists in Central Eastern European semiperiphery of the EU must respond to various aspects of subordinate version of EU integration, including poverty and

Cohesion", *Baltic World* no. 1–2 (2016), pp. 46–56; Ágnes Gagyi, "The Constitution of the 'Political' in Squatting", *Baltic World* no. 1–2 (2016), pp. 80–88.

[73] Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of the Iron Curtain*, pp. 98–112.

[74] Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of the Iron Curtain*, pp. 122–131.

[75] Marta Kolářová, *Gender in Czech Anarchist Movement* (Praha: Subverze, 2004).

[76] Arnošt Novák, „Klimatická spravedlnost je ruční práce", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, and Ondřej Slačálek (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 2024, forthcoming).

competition between local corrupt oligarchies (sometimes with autocratic tendencies and playing with nationalism and racism) and the EU (and especially rich EU states) elites, combining criticism of real pathologies of the CEE semiperiphery of the EU, while promoting the interests of the Western capital. These dynamics also influence the countries of the region which were not integrated into the EU.

On the other hand, the anarchists in the region are also influenced by the geographical proximity of the Russian Empire, which influences them in various ways: by conducting a military invasion (Ukraine), supporting a repressive dictatorship (Belarus), repressing anarchists in Russia, and posing questions of solidarity with anarchists from all three countries (all countries in the region). Together with the relatively recent historical experience with dictatorship and with Russian imperialism (in "Soviet" format), this creates in some countries (typically Czechia and Poland) a strong tendency to a distinct prevailing reaction to the war in Ukraine than prevails in the Western anarchist movements. Organized anarchist groups more often declare their support to Ukrainian defense against Putin's imperial war, and they do not accept a view condemning both sides equally. Differences between liberal democracy (despite all criticism addressed to it) and political dictatorship also become practical questions in the debate – as Russian and Belarussian developments show dictatorships as practical possibilities in the region. However, these questions of course divide anarchist movements globally, and they also divide the region. Especially in the former Yugoslavia, the classical anarchist view prevails, condemning the conflict and nationalism on both sides equally, drawing on the memory of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s.

Instead of a Conclusion: Understanding Hybridity, Revealing Obscure Creativity

The history and present state of Central and Eastern European anarchism is partially composed of stories of explicitly and self-declared anarchist movements. Perhaps even more so, it is a history of hybridities and combinations. Edward Abramowski declared himself a "stateless socialist", not an anarchist, and in fact, his vision also included some remnants of government. Ervin Szabó never declared himself an anarchist, despite his closeness to anarchist ideas and militants. Luisa Landová-Štychová was active in the anarchist movement and in social democracy at the same time. The humor of Orange Alternative in Poland in the 1980s or Navinki in Belarus in the early 2000s was produced by people who declared themselves to be anarchists, but it was above all satire. Also, many contemporary Central and Eastern European squatters or climate activists do not declare themselves to be anarchist or they do so in very vague ways, but very often develop praxis influenced by anarchist ideas. The stories of Central and Eastern European anarchisms are often stories of combinations, hybridities, and bricolages. Only with sensitivities to them can we recognize the hidden originality of Central and Eastern European anarchists.

In previous debates, I proposed five "differences" in the experiences of Central and Eastern European anarchisms. These differences of course need more debate and ex-

ploration. Some of them definitely make sense only for some national cases, while for others they are irrelevant. At least in some cases, there is a completely legitimate question: are the anarchist movements of Central and Eastern Europe really as different from other anarchist movements as they appear? Maybe, some things that appear as differences are in fact similarities. But even in this case, they can cast some light, which can contribute to a correction of the global narrative. Without more carefully discussing them and more keenly comparing them with each other, as well as comparing them with the Western and Southern cases, there can be no definite answer.

Another problem of these differences is also rooted in an implicit or explicit comparison with anarchisms in the West. It not only can homogenize the image of Western anarchisms too much (and suppress internal differences of national cases), but it can also omit a comparison with the global South. In general, we can say that while anarchists in the Global South had experiences in anti-colonial struggles, in Central and Eastern Europe they contended with the somewhat different problem of clashing empires and clashing national movements posed against those empires – and often, against one another. But to develop a comparison more would definitely go beyond the scope of this essay. Probably, it would deserve some dissolution of categories like "the West" or "Global South" into smaller units, following a more regionally sensitive approach.

The commonplace representation of anarchism often falls into the image of a quasi-universal set of general principles with a standardized sample of ideas, streams, and a stable pantheon of representatives (mostly Western, with a few great Russians, and one Ukrainian). In the Central Eastern European region, as anarchist ideas traveled fragmentarily and sometimes in different sets and time frames than in core movements, their influences were also different. To understand them, we need to compare them not only with "original" ideas and thinkers, but also with the local conditions in which they were adopted.

The logic of "also-ism" (*there were* also *some anarchists in this region*…) leads us not to see the moments of creativity present in the anarchist movements in the region. It is often a creativity of adoption, adaptation to a new context, variations, and the creation of hybrids that led to original intellectual approaches, such as the synthesis of anarchism and some ethical or even religious philosophies. This creativity remains obscure if we think only in terms of Western and Russian "originals" and Central Eastern European "copies". It can also be easily obscured if we only understand it from a regionalist perspective as a reaction to local conditions and we only judge whether this reaction was adequate or inadequate. After all, Central and Eastern European anarchists mostly did not consider themselves to be "Central Eastern European anarchists"; they were members of various particular (mostly nationally separated) anarchist movements and/or they considered themselves members of the global anarchist movement, or of its various factions.

Thus, only a combination of these two perspectives – the perspective of global anarchism (especially after its decolonization and transnationalist turn) and the perspective

of the Central Eastern European region – can help us see theoretical and practical creativity in the region in an adequate light. This approach has complex demands, yet it promises much more intellectual adventure than simply continuing with also-ism.

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TRANSLATION

MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND FREE LOVE

Luisa Landová-Štychová, introduced by Kristina Andělová and Ondřej Slačálek

Abstract

Luisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1967) was a Czech feminist, anarchist, socialist, subsequent communist propagandist, politician, and functionary. We present the first English translation of her feminist essay which was delivered as a lecture organized by the anarchists on May 25, 1912, and published in the anarchist journal Zádruha. *In her essay, Landová-Štychová presents her ideas on free love and the emancipation of women. According to her, the various historical and intellectual sources of women's submission worked together: not only religion and capitalism, but also housework and love which alienates women from their interests as well as from justice. Being a propagator of socialist monism as well as of neo-Malthusianism, Landová-Štychová proposes a vision of emancipated womanhood that overcomes, in a harmony of the senses, the limits of both idealism and materialism.*

The introduction contextualizes the essay into the life and work of Landová-Štychová and important intellectual contexts like neo-Malthusianism and the Czech anarchism of that time. It also compares Landová-Štychová's feminism and anarchism with that of her contemporaries (with Emma Goldman's, for example).

Keywords

Luisa Landová-Štychová, anarchist feminism, free love, emancipation of women, monism

INTRODUCTION

Kristina Andělová and Ondřej Slačálek

Luisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1967, also Louisa, born Aloisie Vorlíčková) was a Czech publicist, feminist, anarchist, socialist, subsequent communist propagandist, politician, functionary, and – for a short time during her youth – an actress. This text, which covers the period of her life when she participated in the anarchist movement, was presented as a lecture organized by the anarchist group Politický klub Vilém Körber (Political Club Vilém Körber)[1] on May 25, 1912, and published almost immediately in the key anarchist journal *Zádruha* (Cooperative, the name of which is an archaic word for a cooperative economic organization in early Slavic Bulgaria).[2] Luisa Landová-Štychová was part of this milieu, but not exclusively; she also participated in social democratic activities, and together with her husband, astronomer and socialist Jaroslav Štych, who propagated monism as a socialist "scientific world-view", they founded the group Svaz socialistických monistů (Union of Socialist Monists) and for a short time they even published a journal, *Socialistický monista* (Socialist Monist, 1914). At the same time, she published in the socialist feminist journal *Ženský list. Časopis pracující třídy ženského pohlaví* (Women's Gazette: A Journal for Working Class Women). Already before the war, her ways parted with social democracy because of her socialist monism and anarchist tendencies.

According to her own memories, Landová-Štychová became interested in feminist issues in the early 1900s under the influence of the campaign for universal women's suffrage. During this time, she also began to align herself with the Social Democratic Party, which was one of the leading advocates of women's right to vote. Stanislav Holubec, historian and the author of her only biography, quotes a letter from 1912 in which Landová-Štychová explains her entry into the Social Democratic Party and suggests that she "saw the party as a tool for solving present-day problems, but said the future belonged to revolutionary socialism and anarchism."[3] It seems, then, that Landová-Štychová

[1] A group of Czech anarchists, founded in 1904. The club was named after Vilém Körber (1845–1899), an important original figure of the Czech social democracy and a propagator of cooperative socialism. Starting in the early 1890s, he became leading figure of Czech anarchism. One of the important participators in the club was Vilém Körber's son Čeněk Körber (1875–1951).

[2] "Manželství, rodina a volná láska." Přednáška dram. umělkyně pí. Vorlíčkové-Štychové, která byla uspořádána politickým klubem "Vilém Körber" a konala se 25. května…, *Zádruha* 4, no. 5 (1912), pp. 34–35; no. 6 (1912), pp. 42–44; no. 7 (1912), p. 52.

[3] Stanislav Holubec, *Nešťastná revolucionářka: myšlenkový svět a každodennost Luisy Landové-Štychové (1885–1969)* (Praha: NLN, 2021), p. 45.

saw her entry into Social Democracy primarily as a pragmatic move to enable her to pursue political activism – indeed, at the same time she was already involved in the anarchist movement. It was also at this time that the main concern of her activism was gradually emerging, which was the question of "free love", the nature of marriage, and the regulation of births in relation to the emancipation of working-class women.

During the Great War, she became one of the most important leaders of the anarchist-communist movement (also because its pre-war leaders, such as Bohuslav Vrbenský and Michael Kácha, were, in the first years of the war, arrested and imprisoned in detention camps). Prior to the war, the anarchist movement had already reevaluated some anarchist principles. This reevaluation resulted in the adoption (but not realization) of Bohuslav Vrbenský's proposal to build an anarchist-communist political party. During the war, anarchists became an active part of national resistance against the Habsburg empire and in 1918, they also initiated the unification of socialists into one party. While social democrats refused to participate, anarchist-communists joined the Czech national socialists (originally an opportunist nationalist party, later on a democratic socialist party with strong anti-imperial and anti-German nationalism) and created the Party of the Czechoslovak Socialists. Luisa Landová-Štychová participated in all these activities, as well as in grassroots social protests and in a failed attempt to declare an independent Czechoslovak state as a socialist state during a general strike on October 14, 1918.[4]

After the declaration of the independent state fourteen days later, Landová-Štychová, together with some other anarchists like Vrbenský, Neumann, and Draxl, became a member of parliament (Vrbenský was even a minister in three cabinets). She was active in promoting feminist topics and became infamous for proposing the legalization of abortions; for Catholics, she then especially became a kind of Feminist Enemy No. 1., but she was also strongly criticized by the liberal-national political camp. Landová-Štychová was also active in the socialist scout movement, organizing socialist scouts' summer camps and writing articles for socialist scout journals, especially encouraging girl scouts.

Together with other former anarchists, she soon started to quarrel with former national socialists. In 1923, together with Vrbenský and his group of former anarchists, she left the party and lost her position as a member of parliament. For two years, they tried to build an independent socialist party. After its failure, they collectively joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Of this group, only Landová-Štychová later

[4] The Czechoslovak state was actually declared on October 28, governed from the beginning by a national coalition of bourgeois and socialist parties. For the activities of former anarchist-communists, see Luisa Landová-Štychová, *Sociálně-revoluční význam 14. října 1918* (Praha: Socialistická knihovna Solidarita, 1923); Stanislav Holubec, "Between Anarchism and Communism: Independent Socialists and the Attempt for a Fourth Power in the Bohemian Left in 1923–1925", *Securitas Imperii*, no. 39 (2021), pp. 41–69.

became a member of the Czechoslovak parliament – this time as a communist (1925–1929). During the 1930s, she participated in various anti-fascist activities. After 1945, she became a secondary communist functionary, especially in astronomy, working also on her unfinished memoirs.

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In the context of the feminism of the time, Landová-Štychová can be placed among a stream of thought that was critical to those positions in feminism which mostly "prioritized legal equality between women and men over policy goals related to class".[5] Many of the goals of socialist feminism were, of course, identical to the demands of liberal feminism – especially on the question of universal suffrage for women or other constitutional guarantees. As a radical socialist, however, Landová-Štychová reflected above all on the position of female workers and the specific conditions of working-class women, which were based not only on their gender but also on their class-unequal position. In topics like housework, this combination of gender and class inequality becomes an important source of oppression.

As we can see in the lecture/essay "Marriage, Family, and Free Love", Landová-Štychová's socialist commitment was supplemented by an anarchist will to individual emancipation and self-perfection. It was connected even with the appropriation of Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the Superman, which, according to Landová-Štychová, was of course impossible without a Superwoman. Landová-Štychová was well acquainted with German feminist thought in particular, and many of her arguments came from a critical reflection on sexual differentiation as we know it, for example, from the work of Helene Stöcker.[6]

As a complement of the ideas presented in "Marriage, family, and free love", we can read her article "Free motherhood", an intervention into debate caused in 1913 by the declarations of leading German social democrats (including Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg) against neo-Malthusianism and the idea of a "birth strike", with influence in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[7] The regulation of female fertility was a common trend in expert discourses and quickly became a serious political question. In the early

[5] Susan Zimmermann, "Equality of Women's Economic Status? A Major Bone of Contention in the International Gender Politics Emerging During the Interwar Period", *The International History Review* 41, no. 1 (2019), p. 204.

[6] Marie Bahenská, Dana Musilová a Libuše Heczková, *Iluze spásy: české feministické myšlení 19. a 20. století* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2011), p. 63.

[7] Louisa Landová-Štychová, "Volné mateřství", *Ženský list* 23, no. 39 (1913), pp. 1–2; no. 40, pp. 2–3; no. 41, pp. 4–5; no. 42, pp. 1–3, shortened version in: *Ženy na stráž! České feministické myšlení 19. a 20. století* , ed. Marie Bahenská, Libuše Heczková a Dana Musilová (Praha: MÚA, 2010), pp. 208–215; Soo Hyun Mun, "The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Debate on the Fertility Decline in the German Empire (1870–1918)", *Korean Journal of Medical History* 20, no. 2 (2011), pp. 555–590; Cornelie Usborne, *The Politics of Body in Weimar Germany* (London: Macmillan 1992), pp. 8–9.

20th century, the feminist movement was shaped by many different factors, whether it was a national, social, or religious question, "yet despite ideological and political differences, feminists were linked by a belief in the principle of voluntary motherhood: women should be able to avoid unwanted pregnancy. But they disagreed over what constituted the best means by which to do so."[8] Thus, questions on abortions, sterilization, birth control, and contraception occupied a huge part of the feminist debate, which largely overlapped with neo-Malthusian debates about planned pregnancies and fertility control. While social democrats considered neo-Malthusianist solutions as individualist and potentially making the "army of labor" weak in its struggle with capital, Landová-Štychová defended the position strongly present in the Czech movement, as well as in the international anarchist movement, because of the significant influence of authors like Paul Robin, Marie Huot, and Emma Goldman. According to them, the key to a woman's freedom was her ability to make free decisions about her motherhood, as well as to make oppressive institutions weaker and the future of humanity better (these ideas also included elements of eugenics).

Landová-Štychová's comments illustrate well her main positions. She articulated the troublesome relationship between legal equality and the biological differentiation of men and women. The idea was that rights could not only be equalized formally, but that the biological specificities of women must also be considered when thinking about gender equality. As she aptly wrote in one of her texts, "women should not accept the right to vote as a comfort toy".[9] She pointed out that it is not only impossible to legally equalize women, but precisely because of their "maternal duties" and the biological changes that the female body undergoes during pregnancy, it is necessary to consider the public engagement of women, for which they are "incapable of broader vision and broader interests because of their physical exhaustion."[10] She opposed "unrestricted procreation", which threatens both a woman's right to a free, full, and abundant life, and of course, the child's right to be born healthy, since the mother will not be exhausted from so many births. A proletarian woman should carefully consider her motherhood, especially if she is anemic, because she would bring an unhealthy child into the world. Equally important, according to her, was the choice of the father – if the father was burdened with hereditary diseases or, for example, was an alcoholic, a "cripple" would be born who would not have enough strength to fight for a socialist society, and the proletariat would thus be not only politically but also physically weak.[11] This proletarian adoption of some elements of eugenics was based primarily on some aspects

[8] Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2012), p. 108.

[9] Landová-Štychová, "Volné mateřství", *Ženský list* no. 41 (1913), p. 5.

[10] Landová-Štychová, "Volné mateřství", *Ženský list* no. 39 (1913), p. 2.

[11] Landová-Štychová, "Volné mateřství", *Ženský list* no. 41 (1913), p. 4.

of neo-Malthusianism as well as on her knowledge of the poor health conditions that prevailed in the working-class environment. Multiple births caused health complications both for exhausted mothers without proper medical care and for newborns, who were often born malnourished and in miserable conditions. As many other feminists argued at that time, procreation was not a private matter but always constituted a political issue. That was also why Landová-Štychová became an advocate of the right to abortion and after WWI pushed through several important legislative changes during her later parliamentary mandate.[12] The first proposed amendment to the existing abortion legislation was submitted by Landová-Štychová in 1920. She demanded the annulment of § 144 of the Criminal Code from 1852, which made it illegal for women to terminate pregnancies. In addition, she actively advocated for the improvement of girls' education and its complete secularization and criticized the unequal pay and forced celibacy of female teachers.[13] In addition to explicitly feminist legislative proposals, she also raised several interpellations on issues of social inequality for workers, such as foreclosures, housing, and workers' insurance.

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Almost since its beginnings in the 1890s, Czech anarchism had an ambivalent relation towards the so-called "Women's question". In theory, anarchists declared equality and promoted emancipatory issues; they focused specifically on "free love" and "neo-Malthusianism" (birth control). In praxis, the activities of women were much less visible than the activities of men, and with few exceptions, they did not participate in the roles of editors or speakers (in the 1910s, Luisa Landová-Štychová became the most important exception). Thus, even the topics of their emancipation were formulated mostly by men and from their perspective.

In the Czech anarchist milieu, the criticism of feminism formulated by Emma Goldman also resonated. According to her, emancipation under capitalism can absolve women of their femininity.[14] Along with publishing Goldman's essay "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" in Czech translation (1909), leading Czech anarchist Stanislav K. Neumann formulated his essay "Free Woman", in which he used argumentation in a similar vein, but escalated it into an essentialized and somewhat conservative vision

[12] Dana Musilová, *Z ženského pohledu 1918–1939* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2007), p. 106; Vivian Šefrna, "The Right to Make Choices About Our Bodies Only Belongs to Us! Induced Abortion and the Communist Women's Press in Interwar Czechoslovakia", *Dějiny – Teorie – Kritika* 20, no. 1 (2023), pp. 127–159.

[13] Musilová, *Z ženského pohledu 1918–1939*, p. 54.

[14] Emma Goldmanová, "Tragédie ženské emancipace", *Zádruha* 1, no 26 (1909), pp. 1–2; no. 27, pp. 1–3, trans. A. Lhota. Original published as Emma Goldman, "The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation", *Mother Earth*, 1, no. 1 (1906), pp. 9–17; later on, in 1910, in Goldman's book *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910), pp. 219–231.

of political man and private woman.[15] Both Goldman and Neumann emphasized that love was a source of their anarchist vision. In the words of Emma Goldman, formulated few years later: "Love, the strongest and deepest element in all life, the harbinger of hope, of joy, of ecstasy; love, the definer of all laws, of all conventions; love, the freest, the most powerful molder of human destiny… Free love? As if love is anything but free!"[16] Among Czech anarchists, "love" was also understood as the key to the "soul of a woman" and a potential source of her mobilization into the movement.[17]

It is in this context that Luisa Landová-Štychová entered in 1912 into debate. Not only did she criticize the infantilization of women, but she also named the root causes of their subordinate position in society and lower levels of participation in the movement. In the essay, she even criticized love, depicting it not as a source of emancipation, but as a source of oppression of women and the antithesis of justice. She was broadly accepted into the anarchist movement, and publicly nobody criticized her. Privately, she met probably with more criticism. According to her memoir (written almost 40 years after the lecture was given), Neumann told her that her concept of free love was "worse than prison".[18] In this memoir, she retrospectively answered and commented on her lecture by condemning "free love" in a version promoted mostly by anarchist men: "Back then, some comrades lived with their companions in free marriage and they forgot about how all the risks and all the disadvantages of this relationship under capitalist society were carried by women and children. I professed the first and foremost precondition of free love and free marriage: mutual responsibility."[19]

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After WWI, Luisa Landová-Štychová developed her ideas in a socialist, not anarchist, framework. Both her feminist activism in parliament and her emphasis on returning to nature in the socialist scout movement resonated, but over time her perspective has been almost forgotten. In recent years, Landová-Štychová has returned to the debate thanks to the publication of her biography *Nešťastná revolucionářka: Myšlenkový svět a každodennost Luisy Landové-Štychové, 1885–1969* (*The Desperate Revolutionary: The Thoughts and Everyday Life of Luisa Landová-Štychová, 1885–1969)*, written by left-wing

[15] [Stanislav K. Neumann, unsigned], "Svobodná žena", *Zádruha*, vol. 1, no. 23 (6. February 1909), pp. 1–3.

[16] Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love" (originally published in *Mother Earth* in 1911), in Emma Goldman, *Anarchy and the Sex Question: Essays on Women and Emancipation, 1896–1926* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), pp. 64–65.

[17] See *Mladý Průkopník* 1, no. 8 (1910), issue of the journal of anarchist youth focused on agitation between women.

[18] Luisa Landová-Štychová, "SKN v mých vzpomínkách", *Nový život*, no. 4–5 (1950), pp. 245–253, here p. 246.

[19] Landová-Štychová, "SKN v mých vzpomínkách", p. 246–247.

social historian Stanislav Holubec. While the book presents very careful archival research, based specifically on her ego-documents, it was also criticized, especially by anarchists and their sympathizers, for treating Luisa Landová-Štychová mostly as a "desperate" woman and not as a real political thinker.[20]

As far as we know, none of Luisa Landová-Štychová's anarchist-feminist essays were published in foreign languages. She herself translated some parts of her lecture "Marriage, Family, and Free Love" into German and sent it with her comments to her comrade, Austrian anarchist Pierre Ramus. However, this uncompleted translation remained unpublished in his private correspondence and is stored in the archive of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.[21] By publishing the first English translation of her essay, we hope to bring the anarchist feminist ideas of Luisa Landová-Štychová into the international conversation, including possible posthumous conversations of the ideas of other anarchist-feminists of her time, such as Voltairine de Cleyre, Itō Noe, Marie Huot, Emma Goldman, Maria Orsetti, and He Zhen. We invite readers to consider how viable a part of this conversation (or other conversations) her ideas can become.

MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND FREE LOVE*

Luisa Landová-Štychová

In the gloom of the past we find traces of woman's freedom until the period when her maternal and civic rights were abolished with the fall of communism.

Woman, taken by surprise by nature, which had weakened her with involuntary, frequent motherhood – was made into man's prey. It's entirely logical that the male human being, who had already dared to set boundaries around a piece of land for

[20] KD, "Každodennost (a anarchismus) podle Standy", *Existence*, no. 2 (2022), pp. 52–53; Dagmar Magincová, Michael Polák, Ondřej Slačálek, "'Odepři zalidňovat zemi'. 'Ženská otázka' v českém anarchismu", in *Nečekáme nic od reforem: kapitoly o českém anarchismu*, ed. Bob Kuřík, Dagmar Magincová, Ondřej Slačálek (Praha 2024, forthcoming).

[21] *International Institute of Social History* (IISH), collection 1162, Pierre Ramus Papers. a. u. 193, Tschechoslowakei, Korezpondenz. Annex to the letter of Luisa Landová Štychová to Pierre Ramus. Undated (after June 28, 1912).

* Lecture by the dramatic artist Ms. L. Vorlíčková-Štychová, organized by the political club "Vilém Körber," which took place on the 25th of May of this year in the rooms of the grand restaurant "De Paris" on Ječná ul. in Prague.

himself, didn't hesitate to go farther and also appropriate for himself the female human being to give birth to his blood heirs.

Perhaps she resignedly surrendered – perhaps she defended herself and lost – we don't know. But it's certain that all of us proletarians – feel the weight of woman's humiliation most bitterly till the present day.

The well-known trinity – capital, militarism, and clericalism – have supports that are seemingly negligible, but actually the most powerful in marriage, even in its free form, and in the family.

A human being, as a father or mother, is more likely to let him or herself be oppressed by capital only when they have some level of certainty of the most miserable existence.

Poverty and alcohol tempt man to seek pleasure in woman's embrace, and from this is born a surplus of fodder for barracks and brothels. Human life becomes worthless.

And the cleric awaits his victim. Woman, exhausted by wage-earning and domestic work, weakened by frequent births and sleepless nights – the female human being without rights, overloaded with responsibilities, seeks support and solace in the place where until recently she was thundered against as a tool of the devil and the seducer of the miserable "stronger" sex. And they would still be thundering until today if women had not formed a strong bulwark for clericalism through their ignorance, or, among women with more awareness, an incomprehensible lack of character.

And in the female human being's traces of freedom in times of yore, we also seek a key to deciphering the problem of marriage and the family, which we have made so unnecessarily painful.

We are forced to guess this riddle by our fears for the fate of our ideals of freedom, equality, and the brotherhood of mankind – for who can guarantee that after some time these ideals will not be understood and applied in a perverse, contrary manner and that a new enslavement that is perhaps even worse will not arise and replace today's form of it!? Let's just take notice of the contradictions in the revolutionary parties themselves, despite that the ideas of freedom, equality, and universal brotherhood – are as clear as the Sun.

We say – these are personal interests, and shrug our shoulders. And these personal interests are more or less the interests of people who want to be, or already are, spouses and fathers, and who cannot and mustn't ignore them, despite their pure character. This shouldn't be overlooked.

Marriage itself, whether lawful or free, is nothing other than owning a human being. Either it originated in the delimitation of land, or it gave an impulse to said delimitation. This is indisputable.

Love is nothing more than an attack on personal freedom and on humanity itself.

The lover demands complete devotion from the beloved, and this often means ruthlessness toward others. Love demands understanding! But how! This requirement of understanding has nothing to do with the understanding conceived of by the modern free human being.

This is the so-called merging of souls, which is the relinquishment of one's own independent mental development, and this requirement is the origin of a great many misunderstandings, and unnecessary pain and arguments. A weak-natured woman usually understands her husband so perfectly that she becomes a complete caricature of him.

A woman who is stronger, but also the type who has common sense, becomes hypocritical, cunning. She agrees with the man on everything, but manages things so that in the end she still does what she, herself, thinks is good. And a proud woman – one with strong individuality?

If she lacks nobility, she'll dominate the man. If she doesn't manage to do this, she's quarrelsome and intolerant. She has a vague inkling of the senseless humiliation of the female human being and is taking revenge for it.

A noble woman does not want to enslave a man – but she likewise does not want to be enslaved. Although she is still in thrall to the traditions of love, internally, mentally, she wants to live herself, free, and be attentive to her man just like to every human soul, respecting his freedom of opinions and expressions, but demanding the same for herself.

If the man is intellectually and emotionally intelligent, these kinds of people live more quietly than others. But not more happily. It is only a compromise, for the woman in a relationship that has crystallized this way always remains in the second place. These are small things to look at – but we mustn't overlook them. They make up an important element in the upbringing of our children, from whom we would like to raise the liberated people of tomorrow.

The upbringing of men has been so far perverted – that a man in the household takes the position of a big child. He is unable to serve himself! If he is searching for something, he causes havoc in the wardrobe, the dresser, and perhaps also on his own desk, and in the drawers designated exclusively for his things. Daily dusting, occasional general cleanup – they make him terribly disgruntled. In these cases he is completely biased against the apartment's hygiene and considers it to be a useless effort. He annoys the woman over every button. And I even know men who speak very seriously about women's equality, but they will let their wives clean not only their clothing, but also shine their shoes, even though they could do it very easily themselves. I could count on the fingers of one hand the men I know who, in the case of their wife's illness, would be able to take care of the children, cook, wash dishes, and sweep up. It's not an innate male ineptitude. Only his petty male conceit makes him so clumsy.

You will object to me that the man, as the breadwinner, has the right to rest when he returns tired from the workshop, office, etc. – Certainly! But a woman also has this right! A man gladly acknowledges this, but which one will compromise some of his rights as "head of the family" and enable his wife to also exercise this right!? Many of them simply tell the woman that she should better divide her work and her personal time. It's perhaps the same as when a bourgeois blames a worker for not better dividing his insufficient wages.

Housework!

Constant cleaning, necessary, absolutely necessary, whether from a medical, moral, or economic perspective.

Housework!

Perhaps always and everywhere underappreciated, and at the same time it sucks the freshness out of faces, joy out of life, it breaks pride, and makes mules out of women.

Notice the schedule of chores and whether there is one that the woman can cross off. Every day it's the same thing. Cooking, washing dishes, airing out the rooms, cleaning up, feeding the children, putting on clothing – this all repeats three times every day. Every week to 14 days washing laundry, ironing. Sometimes a general cleanup.

And free time?

It's scarce, and here it's necessary to use it for sewing and mending.

And in the evening – the woman is often deathly tired, but she still resignedly performs the intimate marital duty, joylessly – rather with fear of her cares growing with a new burden of pregnancy and nights drowsing off by the cradle – but yet with a secret satisfaction that the man is still faithful. This casual faithfulness is her full reward for all the sufferings – sufferings that are small, but constant, which are tiring in the same way as a light rain that lasts for several days, during which one becomes numb and forgets that somewhere the sun is shining.

Where will she find time for self-education and raising children?

And this is a happy woman, for the man's income suffices to support her and their children. But what about a working-class woman? By day she is, in the true sense, sucked dry by capital – and by night, she is literally beaten down by her duties as a housekeeper, wife, and mother.

The question comes to mind – who are we actually working for – who receives the sweet fruit of our doubts and our martyrdom?

Will it be our children – children of proletarians already cursed in their mothers' wombs, women who cannot – are not allowed to live in such a way that they will bring forth strong and healthy children!?

Where is that terrible, silent ally of capital that makes woman so horribly patient -?

It's marriage – a narrow, circumscribed family circle.

The perverse upbringing we have already submitted to and which habituated the man to ruin within the woman, right in the period of love, her perhaps subconscious longing for independence, and with the fatuous admiration of a male animal he spoiled her capacity for self-knowledge.

He sweetly offers to be the stake around which she, the beautiful, exquisite flower, will wind herself. The young woman very happily allows herself to be convinced that she is an exquisite flower and that it's necessary for her to have this kind of stake next to her for support.

What actually drives today's human being to marriage? By this, I mean the intelligent

human being who is sufficiently far enough along in his development that he enters a free marriage.

It isn't only the illusion of love and a perverse maternal or paternal instinct.

I think there is far more of the dread of solitude in the longing for "merging".

Why is the human being terrified by solitude?

It's a remnant of the implanted childhood fear of the dark. The human being is confused, seeing bogeymen in the darkness of his inner self because he is unable to truly light up within – the sharp, clear light of self-knowledge. He is afraid of himself.

He has created gods and given them all the beautiful traits that he would like to possess and doesn't believe he is capable of having. He curses his faults, denounces them, excuses them, but doesn't take any serious steps to eliminate them.

What would he have to do in order to be his own god?

He would have to be able to approach each one, big and small human soul, with such deep concern and understanding, perhaps the way Dostoevsky was able to – and he would have to refrain from spoiling these souls by propping them up, but instead show them the way to freedom as piercingly and ruthlessly as Nietzsche. And each such person would have to go through life healthy, strong, knowledgeable, and alone, along his own path, teaching himself and others, but not leaning on anyone and not holding anyone else up. Are we preparing children for life in this way? Do we truly see the future human being in a child, or merely a cute puppet or a burden!?

Of course, we and our children are the victims not only of social disorder, but also maternal love.

Today's human being lives far from a true understanding of nature. He is incapable of closer relations with her. He is satisfied with a sensation of her – he doesn't know her deep, healing breath.

Solitude terrifies him! – he doesn't find an indestructible joy from the wondrous beauty of the life of grass, trees – and free-living animals within himself. He doesn't suffer because a bird fears him – that everywhere he went, he brought only fear!

He is able to pile up beautiful words about nature, he calls her a goddess – but instead of getting drunk by oxygen, sunlight, and knowledge, he would rather get drunk on alcohol.

- Maternal love! Isn't it rather a blemish on woman's nobility? Isn't it the only thing that makes the crystallization of a sense of justice and humanity impossible?

The human being who loves – is unjust.

I'm speaking here only of what I myself have experienced internally as a woman and mother, and what I have also observed in other mothers. That maternal love is an offshoot of private ownership – that maternal love is what most hinders the fraternization of humanity, deep recognition of oneself and others – that through its untimely tolerance or senile willfulness destroys the longings of young souls for free flight, and instead of the fresh, cool, clear air, it teaches them to love the – unhealthy, stinking warmth. It offers them, instead of exquisite artistic experiences for body and soul –

vulgar, unwholesome gourmandizing, indulgence of the excretory organs. For this is the way Nietzsche's motto of "living one's life fully" – is understood by people reared by maternal love – perversely, just like everything these rare souls gave them that was beautiful. Certainly, Nietzsche didn't imagine the overman as an emaciated, anemic creature with rotten lungs, a spoiled stomach, dying of syphilis. And would we be allowed to hope that people reared by maternal love, reared in this way, will be capable of bearing the ideal of socialism and the ideal of the free human being? And something more. The family unit would make woman's freedom impossible. The concept of self-determination, not only for children, but also for the woman herself, has become illusory. Two paths would appear here. Either being free, and by this freedom I mean the woman applying her abilities in any field whatsoever of science, labor, or art – and relinquishing maternity, for it would be wrong for her children to be excluded from family life – or she can be a mother and then – because, according to present opinions, a mother is best as the caregiver for her children and the protectress of the family – give up her demands for development and applying her other skills.

I think this "either/or" would be unnecessary, cruel, and humiliating for woman.

After all, there are still people – men and women, who are truly artists in the matter of understanding a child's soul, who feel an internal need to live with children and give them all the most beautiful things that they have inside themselves.

For them, there is no such concept as "someone else's child". They simply see a child, a tiny human being prepared to take much of what is given to him.

Why shouldn't these born educators educate the children of those who lack these educational capabilities – but who have other abilities that this arrangement will allow to develop without disruption.

Why should adults and children get in one another's way? Why not admit the most natural relationship – the free development of the child among other children – a childhood without scolding, and truly sweet?

Many utter the words "barracks for children – a barracks education" with horror.

If anything can be termed a barracks education, it's today's education – if it can even be called education at all.

The entirely natural, and in the future, necessary, establishment of free motherhood and free childhood – cannot be equated by far with the idea of today's institutes for children – for example – orphanages. There, they make automatons – not people – out of children.

Children belong among other children! So that human beings needn't fear solitude, so that they can find themselves and understand the seeming chaos of billions of worlds and suns – and so they will cease being the arrogant masters of nature or its humiliated victims, it is necessary that already as children they should know the joy and pain of a broad, communal life.

And I would like to see our anemic children transferred to these dreaded barracks.

The airy bedrooms – always clean cots without heavy down bedding, only with light,

soft covers – tepid baths in the morning, choice fare, nutritious, free of the crude juices of slain creatures – life in gardens – full of movement, creating hardiness but also entertaining – in such a way – so that already in tender childhood work becomes the sweetest friend of mankind. And in between, moments of silence and solitude of the educators with the children – the child will himself choose and listen to the one he understands best.

I think that our proletarian child would return with a heavy heart to a narrow family life, and I dare say that even the spoiled children of the bourgeoisie also wouldn't gladly go back to it. There, they would certainly lose the pain of overstuffed stomachs and the boredom of their social position.

Let's return once more to the woman-mother. They say there's a burning question of to what extent motherhood is harmful or beneficial to a woman's health and intelligence – and whether it is truly necessary for people to multiply in unbounded numbers.

Pregnancy is, in any case, an illness. Nausea, dizziness, depression, or irritation – these are symptoms that even the otherwise healthiest woman must bear. The birthing woman is always at the edge of a grave. Even the bravest often cannot suppress almost animal shrieks of pain. I know women who give birth almost every year and do so very easily, but they have still admitted to me – that they are terribly afraid of the awful pains in the critical moment of a child's birth! Yet they otherwise boast of their bravery and prowess, because they are highly flattered by the praise of doctors and grandmothers.

The postpartum period and period of nursing – that is, convalescence. The mother's torn-up insides heal. And during this period I've never heard either younger or older mothers saying they want to have another child later – each consoled herself that this is the last one.

Does anyone have the right to impose the experience of these horrors of bodily pain again and again upon a woman as a civic duty, or else relegate her to sexual asceticism if she refuses motherhood!?

Even in this case, motherhood must be free. This bodily revolution, if it takes place more often, violates a woman's health. If it takes place against her will, it cripples her mental development. For it's the suffering that we take upon ourselves voluntarily that crystallizes human nature. Involuntary suffering numbs a person and makes them one-dimensional, prejudiced. And it is precisely for these reasons that we don't have to fear that humanity will die out prematurely. Only its numbers will be limited, but on the other hand the inner worth of the human being will be increased and thus the life of each human unit will become more valuable.

A hitherto silent revolutionary, raped by capital, but dangerous to it, the subversive power of science and inventions, hastening the fall of private ownership, opens up entirely new perspectives to humanity.

Doctors won't be forced to stultify their nerves with difficult operations, dissecting rotting corpses. They will simply be teachers of health science. They will rescue human

beings from the causes of diseases. They will also rescue the female human being in the same way as the crops in meadows and fields are saved by the regulation of rivers.

Chemistry will free human beings from vulgar gratifications and effort in preparing food – it will make it impossible to exclude an entire class of people – namely, butchers – from the emotional culture, finding the nutrients necessary for the human body in legumes and grain products and is able to serve them to human beings in the most pleasing preparations.

Technology frees human beings from exhausting, enslaving work –

Astronomy, which offers human beings a dizzying and yet much more subtle enjoyment than his digestive and reproductive systems.

Natural life will come into being. Human beings will eat and drink in order to be healthy and live, and they will have sex in order to rid their body of excess juices, and if they want, in order to cause new beings to come into existence.

Erotic sensations will become as obsolete as the sensations of duels or bull fights.

Thus, not only free love, but the free human being, internally immensely wealthy; free of prejudices, habits; full of understanding for every pain, every labor, every effort and error; able to go through life without moral delusions, without religious lies; without the support of official laws and still going straight, proud; living a life [that is] artistically balanced and beautiful.

And here allow me one more small mention of Nietzsche, who had so cruelly laughed at women's nascent, timid desires. Woman can never and never forgive him. He is the only one who has the right not to be forgiven, for the sake of his beautiful, bold dream of the overman. For it could never come true if woman remained what she is now. Her sexual and maternal enslavement, even if released and elevated to divinity, would always and always exclude her from the rights of self-determination – it would make her soul dark, hateful, and only out of revenge, even if it were subconscious, she would overturn the concept of the free human being, of the naturalness of human needs – she would poison man's blood and suck out all of his strength, and she would be his most dangerous, most pertinacious enemy. *And it is precisely the woman whom Nietzsche claimed is cured, redeemed – the woman-mother, and next to her the even more wretched victim of marriage and the family, the woman prostitute, brutally kicked away from human society.* – Both until now silent, suffering, revolting until now only in their inner being – both of them have the fate of Nietzsche's overman in their hands.

Translated by Melinda Reidinger

THE THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUE AND CONSUMER COOPERATIVISM

Maria Orsetti, introduced by Piotr Laskowski

Abstract

In the article, Maria Orsetti (1880–1957), one of the most important figures in the Polish cooperativist movement, criticizes Marx's theory of surplus value. Instead, she uses Wilhelm Lexis's theory to argue for a more complex understanding of the ways capitalism extracts profit. This includes the exploitation of workers both as producers and consumers. The translation is by Michelle Granas, and the paper is edited and introduced by Piotr Laskowski.

Keywords

Maria Orsetti, Karl Marx, cooperativism, profit, price, surplus value

INTRODUCTION

Piotr Laskowski

Maria Orsetti (1880–1957) was one of the most important figures in the cooperative movement in Poland during the interwar period. She was an indefatigable organizer and prolific author. Her extensive writing legacy (often published anonymously or signed only with initials or a pen-name) is almost exclusively focused on practice. Writing as though she were not interested in general theory, Orsetti's works consist mainly of short articles on specific activities of cooperatives across Europe. In addition to that, she wrote popular booklets – on the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, on the People's University (*Volksheim*) in Vienna, or the Belgian and Danish consumer's cooperatives (where she also emphasized their educational dimension: Maison du Peuple in Brussels or the People's Universities in Denmark).[1] These booklets were meant to become kinds of textbooks for the cooperatives. Notably, Orsetti does not provide general rules or guidelines for the movement but focuses on examples – always particular, specific, but at the same time universalized insofar as they may inspire imitation (one can see here a parallel with Gabriel Tarde's sociological approach). This was also the idea behind three small booklets that make up the series "The Lives of Remarkable People" ("Z życia ludzi godnych uwagi"), dedicated to the great figures of socialism: Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, and Peter Kropotkin (the fourth booklet, on Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, was announced but never published). The choice of "utopian" socialism here is meaningful – for Orsetti, this was an anticapitalistic alternative to Marxism, capable of conceptualizing the agency of the multitude instead of affirming the uniform organizing power of capital. The legacy of Kropotkin is of particular importance to her. She translated two of his books into Polish,[2] and edited, revised, and republished the earlier Polish translation of *The Conquest of Bread*.[3]

There are many traces of her anarchist views, although she rarely expressed them directly; instead, she suggested them, leaving clues and hiding them behind the thoughts of the authors she translated or wrote about. She translated Rudolf Rocker's pamphlet *Über das Wesen des Föderalismus im Gegensatz zum Zentralismus*.[4] Her pen-name,

[1] All of these texts have been republished in Maria Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminism: wybór pism*, ed. Piotr Laskowski (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2019).

[2] Piotr Kropotkin, *Państwo i jego rola historyczna* (Warszawa: skł. dla księgarń w Spółdzielni Księgarskiej "Książka", 1924; *Spólnictwo a socjalizm wolnościowy* (Warszawa: skład główny w Księgarni Robotniczej, 1930).

[3] Piotr Kropotkin, *Zdobycie chleba* (Kraków, Warszawa: [s.n.], 1925).

[4] Rudolf Rocker, *Federalizm a centralizm* (Warszawa: skł. gł. w Księgarni Robotniczej, 1929).

Edward Godwin, was a tribute to William Godwin (and to Edward Milewski who introduced her to the cooperative movement). Although she never published on Godwin, she followed the literature about him and even, in a private letter to Max Nettlau, the "Herodotus of anarchism", pointed out two studies on Godwin that he had overlooked.[5]

She never said a word about her direct involvement in the anarchist movement, although references to her participating in one of the anarchist groups can be found both in the memoirs of fellow anarchists[6] and in police materials (which describe her as an "anarchist activist"[7]). It can be argued that her anarchist convictions underpinned her vision of the cooperative movement. She saw anarchism as a vision of harmonious, spontaneous, and, above all, creative activity – she was never attracted to the revolutionary negation. The cooperative movement was for her a way of proliferating alternative social and economic relations. Hence, the tension between her and those anarchists inspired by Bakunin and his insurrectionist perspective.[8] This tension can also be seen in anarchist discussions around cooperatism – those who eagerly referred to Bakunin, saw cooperatives at best as a form for the alleviation of misery but not as a means of radical social transformation.[9]

Orsetti's anarchism is rooted in and remains faithful to Proudhonian mutualism. It can be best seen in her doctoral dissertation, written in French at the Université libre de Bruxelles in 1915 under the supervision of Guillaume de Greef. The dissertation occupies a unique place in Orsetti's legacy because of its theoretical gravity. Notes on the typescript preserved in the National Library in Warsaw[10] indicate that Orsetti intended to publish it as a book. Eventually, however, she decided to publish selected chapters as articles in Polish. Chapters two and four appeared, with minor changes and additions, as a multi-part article "Szkice z teorii kooperacji" ("Sketches from the theory of co-operation"); interestingly, the openly anti-capitalist tone was softened in the Polish version[11].

[5] Max Nettlau Papers, file 922, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

[6] Zbiór akt osobowych działaczy ruchu rewolucyjnego, teczka osobowa Konrada Świerczyńskiego [Collection of the personal files of revolutionary movement activists; Personal file of Konrad Swierczynski], 5922, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, p. 28.

[7] Informacje z ruchu komunistycznego nr. 9 (Warszawa, dnia 4 marca 1929 r.), MSW (dopływ) [Interior Ministry, Information from the communist movement no. 9, March 4, 1929], 1032, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warszawa, p. 38.

[8] Cf. the discussion around the legacy of Kropotkin in the Polish anarchist journal *Walka*, published in Paris; a short review of Orsetti's booklet "Piotr Kropotkin (Maria Orsetti)", *Walka*, no. 17 (1928), p. 6; and the article "Kropotkin a anarchism", *Walka*, no. 14 (1928), pp. 4–5.

[9] Cf. Jean Grave, *Réformes, révolution* (Paris: Stock, 1910), chapter "Le Coopératisme", pp. 145–162; see also *Le coopératisme et le néo-coopératisme* (Paris: Editions de l'éducation libertaire, 1900).

[10] Rps akc. 5894, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa; second copy is preserved in Université libre de Bruxelles, Le fonds de l'Université Nouvelle, 01Z 533.

[11] For example, in the introductory part of chapter 2 alone, the phrase "Before we proceed to examine the range of means at the disposal of the cooperative movement in its struggle against

The third chapter, *Theories du profit commercial et des revenus sans travail en général*, has been substantially restructured, without, however, changing the general argument. Published as an article in Polish, it is the version that was translated here.

At stake here is the rebuttal of the labour theory of value, which is at the core of Marxism. Hence, the category of "non-work income" (*revenus sans travail*), which Orsetti found in the writings of Anton Menger.[12] Orsetti regards it as a descriptive category, referring to specific, historically situated forms of capitalist economy. In the first chapter of her dissertation, Orsetti gives the following definition: "After Menger, we call the non-work income what those privileged by the legal organisation of private property obtain from society without personal participation".[13] This formula shifts the focus in understanding the capitalist system – from regarding it as based on unpaid workers' labour to apprehending private property and capitalist accumulation as multifaceted phenomena where the exploitation of workers *as workers* is only one element, even if a dominating one at the time Marx wrote his *oeuvre*. Orsetti does not look for a unique general mechanism of generating surplus value. On the contrary, her aim is to show that capitalist profit comes not only from unpaid labour, but also from speculative bubbles and the creation of "fictious values" ("These fictitious values, accumulating, for example, in urban real estate, cannot be explained by the direct exploitation of workers as producers";[14] this remark is particularly notable if one remembers the financial crisis of 2008) or, which is of key importance for her, from inflated prices of the commodities. Thus, exploitation affects individuals not only as wage-labourers, but also, and indeed as capitalism evolves, more and more as consumers. These considerations restore the importance of Proudhon as the theorist of the "just price". And although, in the fourth chapter of her dissertation, Orsetti noted that "Proudhon, so pure, so honest, so fervent

capitalism" was changed to "Before we proceed to examine the theoretical side of cooperatism", and the phrase "This statement alone is sufficient to condemn the capitalist system" was removed. We do not know whether the changes were introduced by the editors of the journal or Orsetti herself. The French title of the dissertation *Fondations anticapitalistes du mouvement cooperatif* has been rendered in the Polish literature as "Socialist tendencies of the cooperative movement" ["Socjalistyczne tendencje ruchu spółdzielczego"], see, for example, Stanisław Konarski, "Orsetti Maria Paulina", in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 24 (Warszawa, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1979), p. 258; Janina Wojciechowska, *Maria Orsetti. Niestrudzona reformatorka* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Spółdzielcze, 1985), p. 12.

[12] Anton Menger, *Das Recht auf den vollen Arbeitsertrag in geschichtlicher Darstellung* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1886). Orsetti used the French edition of the book, Anton Menger, *Le droit au produit integral du travail: étude historique* (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1900).

[13] Maria Orsetti, *Fondations anticapitalistes du mouvement cooperatif* [doctoral dissertation], Rps akc. 5894, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa, p. 11; for the Polish translation cf. Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm*, p. 33.

[14] See p. 204 of this issue.

a socialist [...], shows a complete and utter incomprehension of the socialist value of the co-operative movement",[15] in the Polish version she added a paragraph: "Nevertheless, indirectly, Proudhon made a great contribution to cooperatives by giving them a strong theoretical basis. In Proudhon's work there is the idea, subsequently developed more systematically by the Belgian sociologist Guillaume de Greef, that in economic life the simplest, most general factor, and therefore the one which has the greatest influence on the whole of relations, is not the technique of production, as Marx and Engels thought, but the function of the circulation of goods, that is, the way in which production is combined with consumption".[16]

As we have mentioned, the text we present here is a considerably revised version of the third chapter of Orsetti's thesis. While re-writing it, she has removed data relating to the variation of retail prices, and she has added important observations concerning contradictions between the views that Marx himself expressed in Volumes I and III of *Das Kapital*. Orsetti observes that Marx was forced to resolve these contradictions by adopting the "abstract" formula of the "social product as a whole", and thus to neglect "the whole chain of exchange relations".[17] The Proudhonian, mutualist perspective is clearly visible here: the social-economic tissue is built of particular, mutual relations of individuals, and the theory must apprehend them in their multiplicity and variability instead of producing a general scheme that ignores them.

This perspective underpins Orsetti's thinking. Instead of focusing on the unified organization of labour, one should appreciate a wholly different type of organization: cooperativist organization, or rather coordination, of consumption. It preserves every particularity and at the same time serves the general interest. It is a form of multitude (Orsetti would call it elsewhere "another state"[18]). In the first chapter of her dissertation, Orsetti argues that both producers' cooperatives and cooperative credit unions are entangled in the logic of capital concurrence. Only consumers' cooperatives can resist this logic.

Indeed, resistance is a key concept in Orsetti's thought. It is only in the field of consumption that the agency of the subordinated can be restored – their singular powers can be translated, through co-operative coordination, into a social force capable of radical transformation. Consumers' cooperatives allow people to free themselves "from that depressing contradiction of Marx's theory of the ineffectiveness

[15] Orsetti, *Fondations anticapitalistes*, p. 11.

[16] Maria Orsetti, "Szkice z teorii kooperacji II: Kooperatyzm a socjalizm", *Rzeczpospolita Spółdzielcza* 2, no. 2 (1922), pp. 55–56; cf. Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm*, pp. 99–100.

[17] See p. 206 of this issue.

[18] Maria Orsetti, *Przedwojenne obrazki z belgijskiego życia spółdzielczego*, in Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm*, p. 311.

of human effort in the field of economic forces, even though these forces [...] condition the entire social structure".[19] This is of particular importance for Orsetti's feminism.[20] Orsetti observes that since social norms compel women to organize domestic consumption, this is a sphere where women need to look for empowerment and agency. While Orsetti does not neglect the need to liberate women from reproductive labour (that's why she promotes and organizes laundry co-ops[21]), and while she denounces "the ridiculous assertion that a woman's sphere of interest should not extend beyond the affairs of the home",[22] she intends at the same time to transform reproductive labour into a source of feminine agency and will be a tireless advocate of women's participation in the consumers' cooperative movement, and through that movement, in a radical and thorough social transformation. In 1935 she organized the Women's Cooperative League, the organization that not only promoted women's commitment to consumers' cooperatives, but was one of the staunchest defenders of the ideas of pacifism and internationalism – inherent in Orsetti's vision of cooperativism.

But most importantly, as we have seen, the consumer's perspective allows Orsetti to take a fresh look at the dynamics of capitalism as a system of diverse and historically variable forms of extracting of profit, conditioned by multiple social and economic forces. In the conclusion of her text, she presents an outline of an analytical strategy concerning the conceptualization of the relationship between capital accumulation and social resistance. Orsetti opposes the "apparent precision which characterizes Marx's theory" with a methodological "it depends". For "Capitalism seeks to extract the greatest possible profit from every arrangement of relations, and it does so thus both by keeping wages as low as possible and prices as high as possible. These tendencies of capitalism are tempered by social forces acting in the opposite direction: the resistance of organized workers, competition between the capitalists themselves, the self-defense of consumers through co-operatives, and so on."[23]

[19] Orsetti, *Fondations anticapitalistes*, pp. 36–37; for the Polish translation cf. Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm*, p. 114.

[20] See, e.g., Maria Orsetti, "Woman, Whose Name is Millions (On the Responsibilities of Women in the Cooperative Movement)", in *Cooperativism and Democracy. Selected Works of Polish Thinkers*, ed. Bartłomiej Błesznowski (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 171–190.

[21] Cf. Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm*, pp. 369–377.

[22] Maria Orsetti, *Tajemnice tkaczy rochdalskich. Szkic z dziedziny kooperacji spożywczej*, in Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm*, p. 294.

[23] See p. 207 of this issue.

THE THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUE AND CONSUMER COOPERATIVISM*

Maria Orsetti

The issue of explaining how capitalist income is generated is of primary significance for the theory of consumer cooperativism. It is simply incomprehensible that to this time – so far as I know – not a single cooperativist theorist has dealt with this question in depth. Generally, they have been satisfied with mentioning that the matter is unusually subtle and intricate.[1] This is all the stranger in that the only theory that is widely known and can be taken into account from a scholarly point of view – Marx's theory – is presented in the misleading interpretation of the vulgarizers[2] of his teachings that deprives consumer cooperativism of theoretical bases.

In practice, however, this matter has bothered the cooperative movement, as is shown by the long-term passionate disputes between the adherents of the Christian socialist movement in England, who proclaim the right of the worker to share in profits, and followers of the federalist principle. Although life has resolved the dispute with the triumph of the federalist principle, the theoretical explanation of this question has not advanced a single step in the public consciousness.

Our task is to show that Marx's theory is inadequate – that it is at variance with a whole series of facts – and, on the other hand, to retrieve from oblivion Professor Wilhelm Lexis of Göttingen's theory, which is much closer to the truth. In order to clear the way for our deliberations, we must first of all establish certain facts, which we will hereafter regard as axioms:

1) that the only active factor in the production process, that is, in the process of adapting the free gifts of nature to human needs, is human labor. Nature provides the passive factor of production for free – materials and natural forces, over which man gradually gains control. As for artificial accessory means, such as tools, machines, etc., they do not constitute a separate factor of production, since they are only a combination of the two previous factors – human labor and the free gifts of nature;

* A paper presented to the Cooperativists' Society. (The text was published as an article in *Rzeczpospolita Spółdzielcza* 4, no. 11 (1924), pp. 473–482; it is a significantly changed version of the third chapter of the author's doctoral thesis *Les fondements anti-capitalistes du mouvement cooperative*, defended in Brussels in 1915. Translated from Maria Orsetti, *Kooperatyzm, anarchizm, feminizm. Wybór pism,* ed. Piotr Laskowski (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2019), pp. 77–89. [Editor's note])

[1] Władimir Żeleznow, *Ekonomia społeczna. Systematyczny kurs wykładów*, trans. Wł. Lindenfeld et al., Łódź: [s.n.], 1907, pp. 716–717; originally Vladimir Âkovlevič Železnov, *Očerki političeskoj èkonomii* (first edition 1899).

[2] Żeleznow, *Ekonomia społeczna*, pp. 716–717.

2) that it is a fact that there is a surplus value of labor, which is to say, circumstances where the productivity of human labor exceeds the cost of living for the worker and his offspring, as well as that this surplus value is appropriated by the possessing classes. This fact is independent of any theory of value, since we learn it by induction. The proof is the existence of whole social classes living without work but disposing nevertheless of a substantial part of the social income.

In the days of pre-capitalist forms of economics, this appropriation of part of the products of labor of the non-possessing class occurred in a completely open and unquestionable manner. Currently, as a result of extremely intricate exchange relations, the process is somewhat obscured.

In order to visualize it, let us use the following very simplified method of representing things. Let us imagine that the total product of, shall we say, a year's human labor – clothing, food, means of production, etc., are placed in a pile, with each good being supplied with a tag bearing a figure corresponding to the average price of the good in question. The stack is approached by the direct manufacturers of these items supplied with goods cheques, that is, vouchers authorizing them to take a certain amount of goods from the stack. It emerges that these people will, in effect, take only a portion of the wealth from the pile, and generally as much as is necessary to keep them and their successors at the standard of living considered necessary by the class in question in a given era. The remainder of the wealth in this pile is the surplus, the product of supplementary labor. Those who claim the right to use riches not by virtue of labor services but by virtue of ownership rights will come for this remainder. Thus, part of this wealth will be used for the consumption needs of the possessing class, while part of it will be used for further production. In addition to these two categories of people, there is a third that participates in manufacturing work indirectly by rendering services. These are both white-collar workers, such as doctors, teachers, actors, etc., and manual workers, sales workers, transport workers, cleaning personnel, etc. Their share of production and consumption can be conceptualized in two ways. Either we imagine that the products of their labor (their services, as intangible goods) are part of the stack representing general production, or that they benefit – as public servants, municipal officials, etc., do – from a secondary income relinquished to them by both the working class and the capitalists in return for the services, real or imaginary, that they provide to one and the other.

It is not the task of the present paper to criticize or justify the category of non-work income; we believe that it should be seen as a historical category which was necessary at one time for the development of culture and has today become a barrier to its further development. Nor will we cite various theories of capitalist income, such as Böhm Baverk's theory, the theory of the capitalists' restraint, the theory of capital's productiveness, etc., as these theories, in identifying the factor of production with its accidental owner, have no scientific basis. Scholarship cannot adopt the viewpoint of the interests of the capitalists, but must stand for the position of society as a whole.

We can anticipate here an accusation from the proponents of private ownership, who may point out that at least some categories of people benefiting from capitalist income are performing organizational and managerial work. To this one should respond, as Proudhon once did, that this is not the point – that in this case the emoluments the business manager would receive should simply be deducted from the owner's income. In our times, the distinction between the functions of owner and manager does in fact occur on its own in collective enterprises.

Let us return to our social income stack. How can we explain the fact that the remittances of direct and indirect producers suffice to cover only part of the price tags of the said wealth? As we know, the only theory that has received strong publicity, since Karl Marx gave it his name, is based on the assumption that the price tags on commodities are generally correct, but that the workers receive remittances lower than the value of the goods they produce: in other words, goods generally and on average exchange at their values at their proper prices, but the labor of the workers is only remunerated in part.[3] Marx arrives at this result, on which he subsequently based his entire, powerful edifice of criticism of the capitalist system, by adopting the hypothesis that, in the exchange of commodities, the equivalents of social labor are exchanged. The exchange value of a commodity is determined by the amount of social labor necessary to produce it. The concept of exchange value thus defined leads to the concept of surplus value, which explains how the possessing classes live at the expense of the non-possessing classes. The secret of capitalist production is that the entrepreneur, by selling the product of the worker's labor at the proper value of his labor-power, that is, the amount of labor required to produce it (the cost of training and maintaining the worker and his replacements), appropriates part of the labor of the worker, because, as Marx says:

> the daily sustenance of labour-power costs only half a day's labour, while on the other hand the very same labour-power can remain effective, can work, during a whole day, and consequently the value which its use during one day creates is double what the capitalist pays for that use; this circumstance is a piece of good luck for the buyer, but by no means an injustice towards the seller.[4]

This surplus between the value of the product and the value of the labor wage represents surplus value, while hours of unpaid labor represent surplus labor.

Marx not only accepts the above hypothesis, but very carefully counters the possibility of the opposite assumption – that is, that capitalist profits arise from an increase in the selling price over the purchase price – and ridicules the proponents of that theory.

[3] See, for instance, Karl Marx, "Value, Price and Profit", in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 20 (New York: International Publishers, 1985), pp. 133–134.

[4] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 301.

> it is nonsense to suppose that profit[s] [...] spring from *surcharging* the prices of commodities, or selling them at a price over and above their *value*. The absurdity of this notion becomes evident if it is generalised. What a man would constantly win as a seller he would as constantly lose as a purchaser.[5]

Due to the fact that surplus value is the source of all income not based on labor – profit, interest on capital, rent – there is no other source of capitalist income except the unpaid labor of the industrial and agricultural worker; thus, the entrepreneur is forced to share the surplus not only with the finance capitalist, but also with the merchant capitalist. He is forced to sell him commodities below their value, so that, in accord with the assumption, they will reach the hands of the buyer at their essential value (part 4 of volume 3 of *Capital* is devoted to this issue).

"Merchants do not sell their goods," says Marx, "above their value, but buy them from industrialists below their value"[6] – this does not affect the position of the worker; he has done his extra work not only for the benefit of the industrial factory owner, but also to the benefit of the merchant. Given this presentation of affairs, Marx encounters some difficulties in explaining the exploitation to which the wage-earner, employed in trade, is subject:

> The commercial worker – he says – does not directly produce surplus value; he only helps to realize profit. The price of his labor is determined by the value of his labor-power, that is, by the cost of producing the latter. The amount which the capitalist spends on him is different from that which he gains through him.
>
> The commercial worker makes a profit not because he directly produces surplus value, but because he reduces the cost of realizing the latter, and this in proportion to the unpaid work he performs.[7]

[5] Karl Marx, "Value, Price and Profit", p. 127. (Orsetti in her translation shortens the first sentence, which reads: "If then, speaking broadly, and embracing somewhat longer periods, all descriptions of commodities sell at their respective values, it is nonsense to suppose that profit, not in individual cases, but that the constant and usual profits of different trades, spring from surcharging the prices of commodities, or selling them at a price over and above their value", paraphrasing the omitted parts with "profit in general". [Editor's note])

[6] Translation based on Orsetti's own translation from German. Cf. "If he [the merchant] still does not sell the commodities above their value or price of production, this is precisely because he bought them from the industrial capitalists below their value or price of production", Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin, 1981), p. 398. (Editor's note)

[7] The translation is based on Orsetti's own translation from German. Cf. "The commercial worker does not produce surplus-value directly. But the price of his labour is determined by the value of his labour-power, i.e., its cost of production, although the exercise of this labour-power, the exertion, expenditure of energy and wear and tear it involves, is no more limited by the value of his labour-power than it is in the case of any other wage-labourer. His wage therefore does not

The average profit of commercial capital must be equal to that which is yielded by average industrial capital, otherwise the tendency to equalize the rate of profit would result in the emigration of capital from enterprises with lower interest rates to enterprises with higher interest rates.

The question arises as to whether Marx was entitled to assume the said hypothesis as the foundation of his system. The answer must be in the affirmative, insofar as every researcher has the full right to adopt any hypothesis in order to facilitate the explanation of a certain complex of phenomena, and only then is he obliged to reject it when it proves to be infertile in explaining reality, or when new facts give it the lie. Moreover, the hypothesis of a labor-based exchange value was almost self-evident in those days of free competition, the approximate balance of supply and demand, and the reduction of the price of industrial production as a result of technological improvements, and thus it was also used by bourgeois economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

Over time, however, Marx's own attitude to the above theory changed greatly, as can be seen from a comparison of the first volume of *Capital* with the third, which was published decades later, after the author's death, under the editorship of his friend Engels. Some economists even see the third volume's being a denial of the theory laid out in the first volume as a near certainty. For whereas in the first volume Marx began by examining the simplest normal case of exchange, in the third volume, in which he deals with the circulation of goods, he had to take into account disruptive factors, namely competition and the varying composition of capital, which he admits, "falsify the law of exchange and cause it to apply only to the social product as a whole."

The difficulties arising from differences in the composition of capital were noted already in the first volume, but it was not until the third volume that they were resolved. The issue is the following: if the only source of profit is the labor of the workers occupied in the enterprise, then logically only the part of capital that is allocated to labor wages is profitable. The other part, which constitutes the means of production, plays a passive role thereby and does not create any new value. Marx calls this first part of capital "variable capital" and the second part "fixed capital." Thus, as an iron-clad consequence of Marx's hypothesis, the assertion appears that only variable capital produces profit. Meanwhile, reality not only does not confirm this assumption but, on the contrary, strikingly gives it the lie. Not only is profit not higher in those enterprises in which variable capital plays a relatively large role, but there is even a general tendency to increase fixed capital at the cost of variable capital, that is, the substitution of machine labor for manual labor. Marx does not dispute these facts, but attributes the

stand in any necessary relationship to the amount of profit that he helps the capitalist to realize. What he costs the capitalist and what he brings in for him are different quantities. What he brings in is a function not of any direct creation of surplus-value but of his assistance in reducing the cost of realizing surplus-value, in so far as he performs labour (part of it unpaid)", Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 414. (Editor's note)

notion that the means of production play the same role as living labor in the creation of profit to the "limitedness of the capitalists' mental horizon" – and tries to reconcile the theory with the facts by means of the following reasoning:

> As a result of the differing organic composition of capitals applied in different branches of production [...] very different amounts of surplus value are produced by them. The rates of profit prevailing in the different branches of production are accordingly originally very different. These different rates of profit are balanced out by competition to give a general rate of profit which is the average of all these different rates. [...] [The individual capitalists] do not secure the surplus value and hence profit that is produced in their own sphere in connection with the production of these commodities. What they secure is only the surplus-value and hence profit that falls to the share of each aliquot part of the total social capital, when evenly distributed, from the total social surplus-value or profit produced in a given time by the social capital in all spheres of production. [...] The various different capitals here are in the position of shareholders in a joint-stock company, in which the dividends are evenly distributed for each 100 units... [8]

There are two reasons to protest against this reasoning:

1) in capitalist reality it is impossible to see that the rates of profit, including initial ones, depend on the composition of the capital;

2) the process of equalization of unequal rates of profit takes place not only through the emigration of capital, but above all through the capitalization of extra profits, that is, the formation of fictitious capital. If an enterprise which, let us say, cost one million zlotys, for one reason or another yields a rate of profit twice as high as the average, then, when passing into the hands of the next owner, the sale value of this enterprise will be marked at two million. So here we have a case that it is not capital that generates profit, but profit that generates capital, which is also profit and which claims the right to further profits. Given these fictitious values, which assume intimidating proportions, particularly in prices of land and especially in prices of lots and houses in towns, real capitalist values recede into the background. These fictitious values, accumulating, for example, in urban real estate, cannot be explained by the direct exploitation of workers as producers.

There is another extraordinarily broad category of phenomena that breaks away from Marx's hypothesis, although according to Marx it is the original source of all surplus value. This is namely agricultural production: the fact that a bushel of wheat, at a uniform sales price, will contain varying quantities of labor. As Ricardo, a proponent

[8] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Vol. 3, Part 1 (Hamburg: Meissner, 1904), pp. 136–137. (Orsetti used the original German version of *Capital* in her own translation. The passage quoted here has been greatly abridged, cf. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3 (London: Penguin, 1981), pp. 257–258. [Editor's note])

of the labor-based theory of value, admitted, and as Marx stipulates, there can be no doubt in regard to the fact that the differential rent invariably burdens the consumer: in order for the prices at which commodities are exchanged to correspond approximately to their values, it is necessary that no natural or artificial monopoly should exist. At the same time, all agricultural products have – increasingly as the population grows – the nature of a monopoly; and since there are few goods that do not include raw materials of agricultural or mineral-wealth origin, which are subject to the same law, the phenomenon assumes a universal character. This universality is all the more prevalent because both in industry and in commerce a phenomenon analogous to the differential rent can be observed: called extra profit or surplus profit, it differs only from the rent in that it is more transient in nature.

Professor Charles Gide correctly draws attention to the prevalence of monopolies, which, even with fierce competition, allow industrialists and merchants to enjoy a privileged position:

> A monopoly is not some majesty enclosed in a palace. It is everywhere. Almost everyone – in a given place and at a given moment – disposes of a certain monopoly, large or small.
>
> This monopoly is not conferred by law, but by the actual state of things: the fact of having a company, a name, a brand that has been known for a long time – simply the fact that one is on this street corner and not the neighboring one. There are thousands of circumstances that can create a monopoly.[9]

The conclusions that Marx reaches in the third volume of *Capital*, and that his vulgarizers have so far consistently ignored, are as follows:

> The law of surplus value applies to the social product as a whole. The sum of the commodity prices of all branches of production coincides with the sum of their labor values. Profits that do not coincide in individual enterprises with surplus value cannot overturn the general law of surplus value, because everything is resolved by the fact that if in the price of one commodity the capitalist receives incomplete surplus value, then he takes it in excess in the price of the other, with the result that all deviations of selling prices from value cancel each other out.[10]

[9] Charles Gide, *La coopération. Conférences de propaganda* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1910), pp. 309–310.

[10] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 3, pp. 140–141. (The passage is not a quote but the author's paraphrase – a summary of the analysis Marx presents in *Capital*, vol. 3, pp. 260–261: "this is always reducible to the situation that whenever too much surplus-value goes into one commodity, too little goes into another, and that the divergences from value that obtain in the production prices of commodities therefore cancel each other out". [Editor's note])

We can admire the abstractness of this reasoning but cannot fail to admit that the abstraction has lost all contact with reality. Leaving aside the metaphysical nature of the concept introduced by Marx's notion of a "just price" in unorganized exchange, it seems to us that Marx's hypothesis to explain the formation of capitalist incomes proves to be powerless and full of contradictions because Marx, out of the whole chain of exchange relations through which a product passes before it reaches the hands of the consumer from the hands of the producer, has artificially singled out and exaggerated one link, attributing to all the others a subordinate significance, or even in part completely ignoring them – as happened with such an important field as retail trade. The link that Marx specifies is the link of exchange that touches the production process directly – the purchase of labor power. We think that this link of exchange is subject to the same laws as the next one. The point, that is, is to buy as cheaply as possible and sell as expensively as possible. The industrialist who buys labor force and sells the industrial product is in fact acting in the role of a merchant; he fulfills his industrial function as an organizer of production technology and, to a certain extent, in adjusting production to demand. These two functions, that of the merchant and that of the industrialist, do not have much in common and in joint-stock companies they are already diversified into different hands.

If this position is maintained, the picture of the chain of exchange becomes uniform. In every link of exchange there is a struggle between seller and buyer, and the outcome depends on the relation of forces. However, while in all intermediate links the chances on both sides are more or less equivalent, at the two extreme links the struggle is unequal, namely where the economic system for the satisfaction of needs comes into direct contact with the system for profit, that is, in the sale of labor and in retail purchases.

> The capitalist sellers, says Prof. Wilhelm Lexis – the raw material producer, the manufacturer, the wholesaler, the retailer – all realize profits in their enterprises by selling at higher prices than they buy. In other words, each of them raises the price they themselves paid for the goods by a certain percentage. Only the worker does not have the ability to increase the value in a similar way. Being in a disadvantaged position in relation to the capitalist, he is forced to sell his labor at the price it costs him, that is, for what is necessary for his livelihood. It may be that capitalists, in buying goods at elevated prices, lose part of what they gain by selling such at a higher price. On the other hand, these price increases operate in their entirety on the laborer and cause the transfer of part of the value of the general product to the capitalist class.[11]

[11] Wilhelm Lexis, "Die Marx'sche Kapitaltheorie", *Conrads Jahrbücher*, no. 11 (1885), p. 453.

We can make this picture more specific by adopting the hypothesis put forward by Lexis in another of his works. According to this hypothesis the increases to which, on average, prices are subjected at each exchange correspond to the current average rate of profit, calculated on the total capital employed in a given enterprise. Thus, although in buying more expensively the individual capitalist will lose some of the profits he realizes in selling – the total sum of profits will be distributed among individual capital components in a way that corresponds to reality, that is, so that the rate of profit will be independent of the organic composition of capital.[12]

The new aspect that this theory introduces is that it identifies not only the direct exploitation of the worker as producer, but the indirect exploitation of the consumer as a result of the general arrangement of relations.

It goes without saying that, in the end, it's all the same. The income of the possessing class in the final instance must come from the labor of the non-possessing class, because, as we stated at the beginning, there is no other source. The point is only how it happens – and this is by no means irrelevant either for the theory or for the consequences.

The recognition of Lexis's theory by that most orthodox of Marxists, Engels, can be noted as a certain triumph for it. Admittedly, Engels forgets how strongly Marx fought against the possibility of such a solution of the matter, calling it "absurd," when he says: "In reality, however, this theory is simply a paraphrase of Marx's."[13]

Lexis's theory was fully confirmed in wartime conditions of exchange,[14] when demand for goods exceeded supply and entrepreneurs met the workers' demands for wage raises almost without resistance, knowing that they would be able pass these increases, and more, on to the prices.

Lexis's theory lacks the apparent precision which characterizes Marx's theory. He does not give a categorical answer to the question of whether capitalist incomes arise at the expense of the worker as a producer or as a consumer, but a relative answer – it depends. Capitalism seeks to extract the greatest possible profit from every arrangement of relations and it does so thus both by keeping wages as low as possible and prices as high as possible. These tendencies of capitalism are tempered by social forces acting in the opposite direction: the resistance of organized workers, competition between the capitalists themselves, the self-defense of consumers through co-operatives, etc. It is enough to weaken one of these counteracting forces and capitalism's immediate tendency toward gaining the highest possible profit is revealed in all its nakedness. We see this, for example, in the attitude of the entrepreneur to unorganized cottage-industry workers or in cases of monopoly. Wages in the cottage industry, due to the lack

[12] Wilhelm Lexis, *Allgemeine Volkswirtschaftslehre* (Leipzig, Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1913), p. 148.

[13] Friedrich Engels, "Preface", in Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 100.

[14] Orsetti refers here to World War I. (Editor's note)

of resistance on the part of the cottagers, are sometimes downright incredible, and the fierce competition of entrepreneurs can make the selling prices of their products fabulously low as well, although, admittedly, the consumer receives a shoddy product.[15]

Contrarily, it may well be the case that, organized in strong trade unions, workers will win themselves relatively good wages, but capital, being organized in rings and cartels and having a dictatorship over prices, will set them in disproportion to its own costs.

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In general, it can be said that in the dawn of capitalism the line of least resistance for capitalists in gaining profits was the reduction of labor wages. But over time these conditions have changed. In modern times, in what can be called the era of neo-capitalism, under the influence of the concentration and coalition of capital on the one hand, and the defensive attitude of the working class, organized as producers, on the other, the focus of the social issue has shifted and a new phase of the social question has emerged: the question of consumers – which is currently so tragic – and the matter of rising prices.[16]

This new phase of the social question corresponds to Lexis's theory much better than to Marx's theory. The practical consequences are self-evident.

Translated by Michelle Granas

[15] For example, before the war we saw in Brussels outfits for girls for their first communion containing a complete set of clothing, from shoes to veil, at a price of 12 fr. In this case, we are dealing rather with the unilateral exploitation of the cottage-industry worker.

[16] Cf. the article "Nowa faza kwestii społecznej" [New phase of the social question] in the journal *Odrodzenie*, 1912, Lwów. (In fact, an unsigned article, "Nowa faza kwestii społecznej", was in fact devoted to consumer cooperatives and close to the tone of this text, which appeared in the journal of the National Workers' Union, *Niepodległość*, no. 2 (1913), pp. 39–44. [Editor's note])

INTERVIEW

STORIES OF BULGARIAN ANARCHISM

An Interview with Yavor Tarinski by Ondřej Slačálek

Abstract

Yavor Tarinski is an activist and scholar whose writings address both the history of anarchism in the Balkans and the contemporary problems of the environmental movement, with an emphasis on its social dimensions. In this interview, we discussed the historical vicissitudes of the Bulgarian anarchist movement and their impact on the current condition of anarchism in the region.

Keywords

Yavor Tarinski, Bulgarian anarchism, Federation of Anarcho-Communists in Bulgaria, Balkan Federation, Stalinism

Anarchism in Bulgaria has a long-standing history, going back to the 1870s. It includes participation in insurrections against the Ottoman Empire, as well as attempts to build independent communes. A vibrant movement of tens of thousands of people in the 1920s was crushed by the repression of the far-right monarchist regime in the 1930s and even more by the Stalinist dictatorship. While hundreds of anarchists ended up in Stalinist labour camps, some others continued to struggle in the mountains or in exile. We can see imprints of this movement in reconstructed Bulgarian anarchism after 1989, and its experience is sometimes debated – but more often omitted – in discussions about inter-

national anarchist history and theory. We have discussed Bulgarian anarchism with Yavor Tarinski, who has been devoted to researching the history of Bulgarian anarchism for a long time.

Could we start a little bit personally? What is your relationship to the story of Bulgarian anarchism?

My name is Yavor Tarinski. I was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, and have lived there most of my life. But for almost a decade now I have lived in Athens, Greece. While in Bulgaria, I was active in various grassroots social initiatives like the social centre Adelante, which was the first self-organized social centre in Sofia. I was also part of the platform Life After Capitalism, which provided analyses of different alternatives to capitalism that were directly democratic, grassroots, and based on the building of people power. So it is logical that I was also interested in the ideas behind such initiatives, which were rooted in the libertarian tradition of the Balkan region as a whole and in Bulgaria in particular.

Later on, when I moved to Athens, I continued being active in initiatives in Greece and also in transnational initiatives dedicated to the production of grassroots knowledge, like the Transnational Institute of Social Ecology. I am also a bibliographer at Agora International, a website dedicated to gathering bibliographies in as many languages as possible of the work of Cornelius Castoriadis. I am responsible for the Bulgarian section.

Generally, I am very interested in finding out the historical trajectories of different grassroots projects that exist today. And in the Balkans, Bulgaria has one of the richest histories of anarchist and libertarian ideas and practices. So naturally over the years, I have grown to be very interested in it.

What distinctive characteristics define Bulgarian anarchism?

Well, first of all, I think that each context around the world has its specificities. The lands where Bulgaria lies today have a rich history dating back to antiquity. Some of the Slavic tribes that inhabited these lands were quite decentralized. During the Middle Ages, in the Byzantine Empire, there was the so-called heresy of the Bogomils, who lived in commune-like communities. They opposed private property and the centralized form of the Church. The Bogomils were heavily persecuted by the Byzantine Empire. Later on, during the Ottoman rule, there were different forms of resistance. For example, the hajduks, who were rebels, or "social bandits" if you wish. In Balkan folk memory, they are roughly analogous to the way Robin Hood is viewed in the UK or Jánošík is viewed in Slovakia.

More importantly, all these traditions started to take on a more clearly libertarian outlook with the struggle of the Bulgarian liberation movement against the Ottoman Empire. It is at this moment that things start to flourish a lot, and they get a further boost as the struggle unfolds. In the mid to late 19th century, many Bulgarian revolu-

tionaries came in touch with Russian anarchists, nihilists, Narodniks, and anarchists such as Chernyshevsky, Bakunin, and Nechayev. There was a rich exchange. Back then, Bulgaria was still under Ottoman rule, so many of them went abroad (and because of the language similarity, many travelled to Russia). Some of them studied in Moscow, and many of them studied in the liberated parts of Romania. We know that not only libertarian-minded revolutionaries, but also people like Lyuben Karavelov, who was a progressive liberal, were in touch with Bakunin.

Revolutionary and poet Hristo Botev, who in Bulgarian nowadays is considered a "national hero", was in touch with Nechayev. He was even imprisoned in Romania for distributing Nechayev's *Catechism of a Revolutionary*. We can say that Hristo Botev is one of the first Bulgarian revolutionaries to directly and openly express anarchist views. He spoke of himself as a socialist, but with references to Proudhon and Fourier. He also publicly defended the Paris Commune. He said that the goal of the commune was to turn the person not into a mere son of God or a citizen, but into someone whose city's destiny directly depends on himself. He tried to contextualize each person as a driving force of history, instead of distant power figures, kings, monarchs, or politicians.

So we can say that these figures and events played an important role in the development of anarchism in Bulgaria. There was, for example, a large section within the Bulgarian liberation movement that was very open to the idea of a Balkan Federation – the most iconic names of the Bulgarian liberation movement like Vasil Levski, Georgi Sava Rakovski, Karavelov, and Botev. All of them in one way or another supported the idea of a unified Balkans beyond national identities.

The idea of a Balkan Federation was repeated again and again during the 20th century in many forms. If we think about that time in the Bulgarian liberation movement, how did it differ from the ideas of the Balkan Federation that came later on?

Even back then, there were different tendencies among these revolutionaries. Lyuben Karavelov, who like I said was a progressive liberal, envisioned something like a Switzerland-type of federation where each nation would have its own cantons. It would be a type of federation of mini-states, but still it was quite the radical proposal for its time. Another case is Vasil Levski, who spoke about the Balkan Republic with popular rule. The rules would be decided with the majority of the population, and there would be one common law for all ethnicities that would guarantee their equality and freedom.

Then you have Hristo Botev, who explicitly referred to the ideas of Proudhon and Fourier. His vision of the Balkan Federation was a form of stateless, classless unity of all these Balkan people that would guarantee their equality and diversity. And it is interesting that he, as well as all other Bulgarian revolutionaries of that period, see the need for such a federation in which Bulgaria and all the Balkan people in general do not descend into a new type of dependency on a foreign power, be it the Russian Empire or some Western Power. Then they would once again be subjected to foreign exploitation

from a foreign power. Hristo Botev was also pretty much aware of that, and there is a strong anti-imperialist element in this thought. Also, Vasil Levski said that we did not want a tsar, since we now had a sultan. The Ottoman Empire was not that ethnically based, but there was a huge hierarchical machine that was bureaucratic and exploitative.

This was the problem for these revolutionaries. They did not want to replace the ethnically Turkish national elite with an ethnically Bulgarian national elite. And this is more specifically and more explicitly clear with the likes of Hristo Botev. He was not interested in replacing one elite with another, but in putting an end to elite rule. As he says regarding the Ottoman Empire, we are aware that the laws were only written for the slaves. Because he is very aware that the laws that are presented to the population of the Ottoman Empire do not apply with the same strength as the old Ottoman bureaucracy, and of course, we know that they did not apply at all to the sultan himself. So there is this idea of one such federation in which people will regain power and be able to set the rules, the social contract, anew. That will be respected because it will be created by all, its implementation will be observed by all, and it will put an end to exploitation.

In some contexts, the Balkan Federation means the South Slavic Federation, and it was connected with Slavic ethnicism. In some other contexts, Romania, Greece, and Albania are also included, so it transcended Slavic exclusivity. What was the case in the Bulgarian liberation context? Were they connected with ideas of revolutionary Slavism, to which Bakunin, we also know, in some moments of his life, was inclined?

As you know, Bakunin wrote "The Appeal to the Slavs" in 1848. He was very interested in the struggles of the Slavic people, and it is known that in 1869 there was the first meeting, in Geneva, between Bulgarian revolutionaries on the one side, and Bakunin and Nechayev on the other. These were two delegates – Raycho Grablev and Theofil Raynov – of an organization called Young Bulgaria (Mlada Bulgaria). There is even speculation that the first program for Bulgarian liberation was written by Bakunin. So, there was this interest of course, but some of these revolutionaries went beyond Pan-Slavism, and I think this is important. Specifically, Karavelov expressed this, and he even refers to it in his writings. In the project of the Balkan Federation that he envisions, Bulgarians, Serbians, Romanians, and Greeks were all included, but on the condition that they all abandon their dreams of Great Empires.

There will even be efforts by revolutionaries and intellectuals from all over the Balkans to initiate such a federation. One of the earliest such cases took place in Belgrade in 1865, when a number of Balkan intellectuals founded the Democratic Oriental Federation, proposing a federal union spanning from the Alps to Cyprus, based on political freedom and social equality. Their inspiration came from the ideals of the French Revolution, Saint-Simon's federalism, and the socialist ideas of Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin. Later, in 1894, in France, a League for the Balkan Confederation was declared,

in which Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Romanian socialists participated, supporting Macedonian autonomy inside the general federation of Southeast Europe.

This trend was also strengthened by the activity of mixed groups of Balkanites that organized on the local level. In 1909, the Thessaloniki Socialist Workers' Federation was created primarily by Sephardic Jews and Bulgarians, as a federation of separate sections, each representing the four main ethnic groups of the city: Jews, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Turks.

So, some of these revolutionaries went beyond Pan-Slavism. This was important because, unlike other parts of Eastern Europe, the Balkans region was more ethnically diverse, especially when speaking about the future of the peninsula, you cannot begin by excluding peoples. We know also that Vasil Levski, another revolutionary that I mentioned, has insisted that the struggle is not to chase away the Turkish people from the Balkans, but the Sultan and his unjust laws. So, we observe over and over this element of rejecting projects of empire, while embracing the huge diversity of ethnicities.

For the last time about Botev. As you posed it, it was a question of theory and ideas about the future, but at the same time, it was a question of immediate emancipatory national liberatory struggle. How did he connect his radical socialist ideas with Bulgarian resistance against the Ottoman Empire?

Well, first of all, Bulgaria was one of the last countries to liberate itself because of its position. Greece was positioned in a place that was harder to be controlled by the Ottoman Empire, and there was a vast interest there by the English and the Russian Empire as well. And also one of the strong elements of the liberation was the widespread piracy that the Greeks practised. On the other hand, Romania was separated by the huge Danube River. So once these lands were liberated, it was much more difficult to retake them. Bulgaria was one open field from Istanbul; it was much more prone to direct control by the sultan.

And there is also a major difference between the different revolutionary struggles and movements that is also time-specific. The Greek liberation movement developed in the transition from the 18th to the 19th century, so the ideas are much different. One can detect some kind of proto-socialist ideas, but these have yet to ferment into a clearer political project. Of course, there are figures like Rigas Feraios, who advocated one of the first visions for a Balkan Federation, basing it on a common Christian ideology that was shared by the majority of Ottoman subjects in the Balkans. And then again, there is one specific Greek figure, Alexandros Ypsilantis, who did everything to prevent the people of the peninsula from revolting together against Ottoman rule. There was a time when the well-known conspiracist organization Filiki Eteria, which organized the Greek Revolution, had members from the Romanian and Bulgarian liberation movements, and there was the idea of preparing a pan-Balkan Revolution. But Ypsilantis,

who was raised amidst the upper crust of the Russian aristocracy, through a series of machinations manages to push away any Romanian and Bulgarian presence within the organization and put an end to the idea of a revolution by all Balkanites. So, with this, the revolution in Bulgaria is postponed.

A time had to pass until a liberatory movement was formed again. And when such was finally reinvigorated in the second half of the 19th century, it was the Paris Commune that proved a huge influence on a number of Bulgarian revolutionaries. For example, Ivan Vazov, considered one of the greatest national poets of Bulgaria, who wasn't a radical himself, notes that while residing in Romania, he came in touch with Bulgarian exiles there, and he writes in one of his plays, *The Outcasts*, a very characteristic line that the Bulgarian revolutionaries have started having appetites not only for revoking the Ottoman yoke from their back but also for universal equality and a commune. So we start seeing this element of the Commune appearing in the works of Botev and in the works of Vazov. More and more we hear about this radical proposal for social revolution and not simply for national liberation. And this is very time-specific. It couldn't emerge that easily before.

Later on, the examples that we have for communes at the end of the 19th century are all referenced either by the revolutionaries themselves, naming these uprisings communes, or by the programs that they started implementing, which we see resembling heavily the programs implemented by the Paris commune. When Botev speaks about the Balkan Federation, we see elements of Proudhon's federalist principle. We see all these things that are time-specific that made these radicalized revolutionaries go ahead and propose things that were quite ahead of their time for Bulgaria. Suddenly we see the federation going from a project based on Christian common belief among enslaved peoples to a project for a classless society of universal equality.

How did the anarchist movement develop after Botev's death in 1876 and after the foundation of independent Bulgaria two years later?

During the initial April uprising of 1876 – some of the most notable revolutionaries died, including Botev, in an attempt to make the Bulgarian population revolt from within the Empire. This plan envisioned committees be created, in small villages and in cities, that would prepare the ground for popular revolt. This did not happen and many of these revolutionaries were killed.

There was one notable example in the city of Panagyurishte, where the revolutionary Georgi Benkovski was based. He was very influenced by utopian socialists and we can also say by libertarian ideas. Before the uprising, there was a meeting of *voivodi*: leaders of guerrilla groups that were acting against the Ottoman Empire. There they devised a plan for how the uprising should develop, which included the formation of a federation of communes. And in the city of Panagyurishte, the rebels tried to initiate

this plan. When they took over the city, they declared that there was no longer a distinction between our Muslims and Christians. Also, they abolished private property (while recognizing the right to personal property, something which is completely different). All the large cattle, pigs, and cows are gathered in a space called an *Obshta bachia* (a common house or common barn) that is accessible to the population of the settlement. Individual households are allowed to keep their chickens and some smaller animals, but the large cattle are kept in common. They also abolished the monetary system and replaced it with a voucher system that was aimed at more justice and was intended to promote equality and equity among the population. But it was a very short-lived experience because the Ottomans responded with brutality.

After the April Uprising of 1876 came the big Russian–Ottoman war, as a result of which parts of Bulgaria were liberated. But many territories remain under Ottoman rule, and as a result there was the Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising in 1903. During this revolt, we have a very significant example, maybe the most significant of them all. In the Strandzha mountain region, spanning between today's Bulgaria and Turkey, an anarcho-communist commune was established. One of the first things the rebels did after taking control over several settlements was to publish a decree in Greek. While predominantly Slavic, the region also had a Greek minority because of its close proximity to the Greek border. With this decree, the rebels tried to say that they were trying to implement a multicultural project for the Balkans, and not restoring some sort of a Great Bulgarian Kingdom. That this uprising was for all the Balkanites. It was about universal human equality and emancipation. We see again this idea of Balkan unity beyond narrow Slavism, which I find very important.

A prominent figure in the Strandzha commune was Mihail Gerdzhikov, one of the great anarchists who continued the legacy of Botev. He was among the creators, in 1919, of the Federation of Anarchist-Communists of Bulgaria, an organization that now has more than a century of history and existence. So, in 1903 he, his guerrillas, and large segments of the local population created a large commune that encompassed several settlements.

How would you characterize them?

Gerdzhikov and his guerrillas were very reminiscent of the Makhnovists that came in 1918 to Ukraine. They were very clear in their message to the local peasantry that they were not interested in managing public affairs on behalf of the people. They try to liberate the area, but how will it be managed and how will it be run afterwards? That is up to the common population, and they allow space for the locals to organize into committees and councils. It lasted for about a month. The rebels also conducted expropriations. There is one example of a salt mill, with several hundred tons of salt within it, which was opened by Gerdzhikov and his guerrillas. They do not engage in

distributing it themselves to the people to become some kind of heroes. They leave it open and they declare to the nearby villages that "OK, it is open. There is no security. It is up to you to organize the distribution of the salt". So they are very similar in their understanding of what the Makhnovists think the goal of a revolutionary insurrectionary army should be – to help villagers and workers, without interfering with civil life. Instead, it urges and leaves local populations to immediately begin setting up their own institutions of self-management.

And once again, this commune, as the ones that came before it, is brutally suppressed by the Ottoman army. But we see how as the struggle proceeds, you have more people who explicitly identify as anarchists and such practices of popular self-government happen again and again.

There was a connection between the 1903 uprising and the Macedonian national struggle. As it took place on Ottoman Empire land, was it linked to some versions of anti-imperial nationalism or struggle against empire – and maybe also with foreign affairs of the Bulgarian state? Also, the organization which started this uprising was founded in Thessaloniki. So, was there some nexus between Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire, and Greece in the transnational activities of this organisation?

To this day, Macedonia remains a matter of dispute between Bulgaria and Greece. Both states have claims over its territory, language, and identity. Of course, there have been different tendencies that have pushed for different agendas. There have been those who have wanted a liberated Macedonia to be included with the territories of the Bulgarian Kingdom.

But there have been others, like Gerdzhikov or Gotse Delchev, who, under socialist and libertarian influences, envisioned Macedonia and Adrianople as autonomous zones, part of a Balkan Federation. It is only logical that there was growing tension between the nationalist and socialist tendencies inside the liberation movement. Things reached the point where assassinations were conducted. One of the most notable victims was Yane Sandanski, one of the leading figures of the left-wing of the movement and also a supporter of autonomism and federalism, who was assassinated by the right-wing.

There is also another Bulgarian-Macedonian anarchist revolutionary of this period – Petar Mandzhukov, who had a close relationship with the Boatmen of Thessaloniki – a nihilist terrorist group that targeted the Ottoman-related capital. He was a participant in the armed struggle against the Ottoman authorities. And in the two volumes of the newspaper which he published, called *Bunt* (*Revolt*), there was a program for a Balkan Federation.

We can conclude that for many anarchists and socialists, the struggle for Macedonian independence was the last hope for creating a society that would not be based on nations and states, but rather would be based on this multicultural federation of communes.

At the same time, they combined anarchism with some version of national liberation. For example, Misha Glenny, in his influential history of the Balkans, considered them to be some combination of anarchism and national liberation struggle, which he views to be very dangerous.

I understand this. And it is interesting that in the Balkans the anarchist current in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire and through all its stages was taking an active part in the national liberation movement. It was not a bystander; it was participating and it was trying to infuse it with its ideas and values. And one can say that it ultimately failed. Georgi Hadjiev (aka Georgi Balkanski), the prominent Bulgarian anarchist author, writes in his book *National Liberation and Libertarian Federalism* (1992), that:

> Another lesson to be learnt from the participation of Bulgarian anarchists in the national liberation struggles in Macedonia and Thrace is that they closely linked their work as anarchists with the popular movement. They invested much energy in this struggle and made great sacrifices, but this potential was not realized well or to the full. [...] The task of developing a discrete, organized anarchist movement was considered less important and not made a priority until later on.

But, on the other hand, if it wasn't for these libertarian influences, there weren't going to be any remnants of popular insurgent communes, for example. Even if their existence was short-lived, the fact that it even existed is of significance. And to use the words of Karl Marx, "the great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence". Such experiences remind us that the Balkans were not necessarily destined to end up being a peninsula of warring nationalisms and xenophobia. That there were masses of people willing not only to listen to these ideas but to take up arms, to fight and to implement them into practice, to create revolutionary councils, to create communes. This was fascinating in a sense, and has left some relics that contemporary movements in the Balkans can use when articulating their political projects in ways that take into consideration the local context.

Did the suppression of the Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising mean the death of idea of communes?

Despite the death and destruction unleashed by the Ottoman forces, the commune form did not disappear. Within Bulgaria, there were several examples of communes, smaller ones. One of them was created in 1906 near the city of Burgas. It has come to be known as the Tolstoyan commune of Burgas. It was established by a group of anarcho-Christians from the Tolstoyan current who returned from studying abroad.

They proceeded to establish this commune to implement their ideas into practice. They arranged with the local mayor to give them a house and several hectares of land. There were also other communes that were religious, but this one was specifically interested in propagating the Tolstoyan brand of anarcho-Christianism. They were not only a self-managing commune working in common, but they also created a self-organized publishing house where they printed a magazine called *Vazrazhdane* (*Revival*), which was dedicated to Tolstoyism. They even sent copies of the journal to Leo Tolstoy himself, who back then was in his eighties. Tolstoy was thrilled. Members of this commune went to his home in Yasnaya Polyana, where they had an exchange and invited him to come and spend his last days in the Tolstoyan commune in Burgas.

But due to the tense political atmosphere in the region, the authorities of Bulgaria did not really like having such pockets of anarchism on its territory. As a result, local authorities got increasingly irritated by the Tolstoyists, especially because they were not enclosed in their own internal affairs but were engaged in printing and distributing their journal and organizing public talks. So, they started accusing them of reviving Bogomilism and undermining Christianity and the Bulgarian Church, thus subverting the Bulgarian Kingdom. After two years of existence of the commune, the Tolstoyists were forced to escape the country. But some of them actually went to Tolstoy's Yasnaya Polyana, where they created a commune with some locals and lived there. Today, in this small village on the outskirts of Burgas, in the local *chitalishte* (cultural and municipality centre), there is an exhibition dedicated to Tolstoyism, which remains an exotic landmark.

Were there some communes later on?

The commune form indeed proved persistent in the imagination and practice of Bulgarian revolutionaries. There was another commune that we know of near the city of Ruse in the early 1920s, located along the shore of the Danube River, which runs along the border between Bulgaria and Romania. Because of its location, it also hosted illegal anarchists, who in case of detection, could cross the border and avoid arrest. This commune endured for several years. We know that one of the most notorious Bulgarian anarchists of this period – Georgi Sheytanov – was also living there for some time while in hiding.

At some point, a sun-worshipping sect called the White Brotherhood, followers of the Bulgarian mysticist Petar Danov, formed a small commune of their own near the anarchist one. The name of the sect comes from its members dressing in white. They established a commune of their own there, but with clear religious characteristics, not political ones. But in the sect's written sources, there are references to the anarchist commune. In these, the anarchists of the Ruse commune are described as very educated people who give lectures and speak about political philosophy. But of course, there was

the problem of religion. The anarchists from Ruse were against any form of authority, including the religious one, while the Donovists recognized in their spiritual leader the highest authority. Thus, there was an unbridgeable chasm.

Unfortunately, the anarchist commune was abandoned in 1923, when a wave of persecutions began against anarchists. It was a period in which the authorities decided to take away the weapons left among the Bulgarian population from the guerrilla warfare of the last periods of the Balkan War. And in the city of Yambol, a local anarchist organization refused to do that. Because of their refusal, there was a massacre in the city, with more than 30 anarchists being killed. Today, there is a monument in Yambol of these massacred anarchists. A wave of prosecutions of anarchists followed. The people in the Ruse commune were forced to flee because it was not safe to reside in an openly anarchist commune. These were the periods between the big revolutions and the big uprisings. And the anarchist movement in Bulgaria tried to maintain the spirit of these uprisings, experimenting with their ideas in practice, even if on a much smaller scale.

You already mentioned the Federation of Anarchist-Communists of Bulgaria, founded in 1919. What do we know about the Bulgarian anarchism of the 1920s?

Anarchism in Bulgaria, especially in the 1920s, became very strong. The members of the Federation of Anarchist-Communists of Bulgaria probably numbered tens of thousands and could be found all over the country. The organization was quite massive, and was divided into four chapters – the Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest chapters. The number of anarchist newspapers increased dramatically, especially *Rabotnicheska Missal* (*Workers Thought*), with national circulation.

It was within this atmosphere that one last effort to implement the commune form in practice was being made. It was very significant, although very short-lived. It took place in June 1923, when a reactionary coup d'etat took place under the approving eye of the King.

In the wake of this event, in the village of Kilifarevo, the local anarchist organization held a big meeting in the night when the coup was announced. They decided that they wouldn't accept this and would prepare for a revolt. They drafted a plan – the next morning they would go out on the street and protest against the coupists, and if there were a lot of critical mass gathered, they would initiate an uprising. During the same night, the local communist group also held a meeting, deciding that it would also act. Members of the agrarian party did the same. But the anarchists were the decisive force. On the 10th of June, a mass demonstration took place. The anarchist Georgi Popov delivered a speech and announced the creation of an insurrectionary commune – the Kilifarevo Commune.

The rebellious population dismantled existing local authorities and replaced them

with a revolutionary council. Nearby settlements did the same, as they were informed of the plan from the previous night. And thus, the whole region around Kilifarevo was mobilized. We see something very important – the rebellion led to the creation of new popular institutions.

This was very characteristic of anarchist tradition back then, including the Bulgarian one, as well as that of the Spanish anarchists of 1936. They were not afraid to set up alternative institutions, something that could be characterized as a problem of modern anarchism. We must overcome, as Murray Bookchin insisted, our fear of institutions – as they can be set up from below to facilitate the values of universal equality and direct participation.

How did this attempt end?

Unfortunately, in just two days, the monarcho-fascist authority sent a huge army, and they brutally repressed the rebellion. Many peasants were killed and many more were arrested and tortured in the prisons. Nevertheless, some of the rebels created an anarchist guerrilla group known as the *Cheta of Kilifarevo* active for some time until it was dispersed by the authorities, and some of its most prominent members, such as Georgi Sheytanov, were murdered by the police.

So, in a sense, the Kilifarevo Commune closes the communard chapter of the history of Bulgarian anarchism.

Michael Schmidt, in his *The Anarchist-Communist Mass Line. Bulgarian Anarchism Armed* (Zabalaza Books, 2008), notes that in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, anarchists participated in the founding of the Leninist Communist Parties, while this was not the case in Bulgaria. He tries to explain it by the fact that there was a mass anarcho-communist movement. Do you agree with him or do you think that there were different causes?

I would agree because, as I mentioned before, the anarchist movement grew rapidly. There were numerous anarchist groups in cities, but also, and especially, in the countryside.

But of course, there were some anarchists that collaborated with the Communist Party in Bulgaria, like Tacho Tachev. He was something like the black sheep of Bulgarian anarchism in those days, because of his relationship with the Communist Party. Tachev in particular is an interesting case because he advocated for anarchists to take part in municipal elections in Bulgaria on the local level. And he was advocating for this in the first half of the 20th century, long before Murray Bookchin did. When the regime change happened in 1944, such anarchists, who prior to that had collaborated with the Communist party, were forced to distance themselves, as the repression of their anarchist comrades increased and the Stalinist state proved a hard bureaucratic mechanism for exploitation.

How would you describe those anarcho-communists in ideological terms? What did they believe in?

There was a mixture of ideological influences. One of the most ideologically influential theoretical figures among Bulgarian anarchists was Bakunin. There was also influence coming from the ideas of Nechayev. They were supporters of the social revolution in a sense of mass popular uprising driven from below, as well as of armed struggle. And of course, they were also influenced by Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus.

But at the same time, Bakunin was not an anarcho-communist...

Yes. But even so – all the anarchists that I have met that are survivors – back then they also described themselves as Bakuninists and anarcho-communists. And also there was an element of conspiratorial manner...

They incorporated certain elements of Bakunin's theory such as his concept of Social Revolution and his vision of a stateless federation of communes.

What about other streams in Bulgarian anarchism? Were there some anarcho-syndicalists or individualists at that time?

Anarcho-syndicalism was the other major anarchist current in Bulgaria, although not as strong as the anarcho-communist one. In the 1930s, in the region surrounding the city of Haskovo, they formed an anarcho-syndicalist confederation called Vlasovden. There are anarcho-syndicalist groups in other parts of Bulgaria as well. In the capital Sofia, such groups published the newspapers *Rabotnik* (*Worker*) and *Rabotnicheski Glas* (*Worker's Voice*). In the city of Veliko Tarnovo, one volume is published of another journal entitled *Federalist*, featuring articles by, among others, Rudolph Rocker.

It is interesting because it was mostly the opposite case in Spain. There were strong anarcho-syndicalists, and even in France there were strong anarcho-syndicalist unions and smaller anarcho-communist groups or federations.

I think one of the reasons behind this is that in the period in question, Bulgaria was predominantly an agricultural society. Because of that, one can also suggest that the ideas of Élisée Reclus, a predecessor of eco-anarchism, were also influential. For example, in the city of Pernik in the 1940s, there was a small group with his name. They were arrested for their intervention – spreading flyers at a Communist Party event on the anniversary of the Spanish Civil War, where they tried to explain that what had happened was the opposite of what the official speaker was saying. They were all arrested and sent to Bulgarian gulags and prisons afterwards. So there was this specificity of a predominantly agrarian society where anarcho-communism firmly took hold.

In the international history of anarchism, Nechayev is mostly considered to be its evil spirit. Even Bakunin distanced himself from him, as well as a majority of anarchists. But not in the Bulgarian case...

There were certain aspects of his philosophy that were influential. His *Catechism of a Revolutionary* in particular, which, as is speculated, was distributed even by Hristo Botev himself. It was his ideas of subsuming one's individual self to a greater revolutionary purpose, as well as his insistence on fighting the State and the Church by any means necessary, with an unwavering focus on their destruction.

In many cases, like French, Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian anarchisms, we can find a strong connection between anarchism, science, and art, especially poetry. Was it also the case in Bulgaria or not?

Yes, definitely. You can start with Botev himself. He is most famous in Bulgaria as being a revolutionary poet. Later on, there were many anarchists in the golden period in the 1920s and the 1930s who were working in parallel as scientists and medical doctors. One of the greatest Bulgarian anarchists was actually one of the first surgeons in Bulgaria – Paraskev Stoyanov. In the 1880s, he studied in France and later returned to Bulgaria. He wrote the first book on practical surgery. Nowadays, there are hospitals and streets named after him. And there were many other cases like this. They were very well-educated people.

So of course, I think there is a common thread that bridges libertarian ideas and science, in the sense that both rest on debating and deliberating, as well as a constant questioning of established truths. We most certainly need a critical approach to science, without negating it altogether, as happens in cases of historical fascism or contemporary anti-vaxxers.

What did come after the glorious "golden years" of the 1920s and part of the 1930s?

There was another coup d'état in 1934, and with it a clear monarcho-fascist regime. Nazi policies began being adopted, even before Bulgaria joined the Axis powers. Communists and anarchists were persecuted. There was a repression of the Jewish people, although the official Bulgarian historiography does not recognize it. In recent years, there have been some major works, especially a book by Lea Koehn on the antisemitic policies of the Bulgarian Kingdom in the period 1940–1944.

What happened with the anarchist movement?

As I said before, during the monarcho-fascist period, anarchists were persecuted and repressed. Many were shoved into overcrowded prisons. In September 1944, the Father-

land Front coalition, led by the Bulgarian Communist Party, and with the help of the Red Army, manages to establish a new regime. Party cadres are installed on all levels of State power, and the era of Stalinist totalitarianism begins.

In the very beginning, there was a beacon of hope, although many were aware of the situation in the Soviet Union. But nonetheless, anarchists hoped that things would be better than under the previous regime. So, at the beginning of 1945 was is an effort to reinvigorate the Anarchist Federation and start anew. In Sofia, in a neighbourhood called Knyazhevo on the outskirts of the city, a conference is being held. There is a huge attendance – over 100 delegates from anarchist cells and groups from all over the country. But after the first presenter speaks, militia men enter and arrest everyone. With this, a massive crackdown on anarchists begins. For one night, over 600 anarchists were being arrested in different parts of the country. These were among the most active and energetic figures of the anarchist movement. With them being detained and sent to the first Bulgarian gulags, the anarchist movement is left in disarray and shock.

Very interesting was the case of Gerdzhikov. When the Stalinist regime is established, he is already an old man. So, he was not considered an immediate threat to the Communist Party's grip on power. But beyond that, he was also something of a national hero because of his participation in the Ilinden Uprising and the Strandzha Commune. Originally, when the communists took power in Bulgaria, Gerdzhikov called for his comrades, the anarchists, to critically support the new authority, showing goodwill at the beginning. But very quickly, in 1945, he retracted these words of his. And when the authorities tried to award him a medal for his part in the National Liberation struggle, he refused it by saying that if they wanted to award him, the best award would be the liberation of his anarchist comrades from the prisons and the gulags. He died in 1947 from old age.

What could anarchists do under the new conditions of the Stalinist dictatorship?

Some of the anarchists joined the so-called Goryani movement. The Goryani was a movement of guerrillas in the mountains, in the forest regions where they were hiding. They were trying to use guerrilla tactics against the Red Terror. It wasn't a unified movement. There were different guerrilla groups that acted on their own, or with a little coordination with other groups. There were anarchist Goryani guerrillas, like the group from Karlovo led by the anarchist Hristo Cholakov. The anarchist group from Karlovo was also the longest-lasting Goryani group that fought the Stalinist power – from 1951 to 1954. But there were other groups, often with diametrically opposite ideas from the anarchists, often consisting of monarchists or members of the agrarian party. If there was a collaboration, it was when a group wanted to hit a target that was much stronger and needed extra backup. In such cases, the anarchists collaborated with more left-leaning Goryani groups.

Beyond that, Bulgaria was in a state of a stupor. There was a government that proclaimed, on an ideological level, that power had been distributed to the society, that

a radical equality was being established, that all were now comrades, etc. Simultaneously, its practice showed a completely different picture – you could see everywhere a rampant cult of personality, inequality, etc. You could see many people being repressed for their political ideas. And of course, one of the main enemies of this new "power of the people" were the anarchists.

What was the scope of repressions and their results?

The repressions were massive in scale. In just a few years, all anarchist organizations and press were forbidden. Anarchists by the hundreds were imprisoned and sent to gulags. To avoid persecution, many of those still unimprisoned sought to escape the country, through either Yugoslavia or Greece. Most often, the final destination was Paris. Paris back then was a hotbed of revolutionary ideas. Although one of the big capitals of the Western powers, it nonetheless had a Bohemian culture and tradition of revolutionary immigration. Many Bulgarians also made Paris their home, and whatever political activity continued, it was mostly from there. Many newspapers and journals continued being published from there, and there were efforts to get them circulated in Bulgaria, but this was almost impossible.

Were there other forms of resistance?

One of the most symbolic and probably one of the last symbolic actions of the anarchist movement in Bulgaria happened in 1953. The then-young anarchist Georgi Konstantinov blew up Stalin's monument in one of the most central and iconic parks in Sofia – Boris Garden in the heart of the capital. He was arrested a couple of days later for this and was sentenced to death. Luckily for Konstantinov, Stalin died just a couple of days after the sentence was issued. Because of this, his sentence was commuted to 20 years in prison. But after nine years in a very harsh prison and gulag environment, he was let out on probation due to a wave of amnesties, and he used the chance to illegally escape the country and move to Paris.

There were also worker strikes. In May 1953, something in Bulgaria took place that many consider the first revolt of East European workers after the death of Stalin – the Plovdiv Tobacco Workers' Strike. Among the most prominent figures of this strike was the anarchist Stanio Vatev. The tobacco workers were met with fierce repression, with militiamen opening fire, killing several people, among them Vatev.

But generally, things in Bulgaria from the second half of the 1950s and onwards quieted down. In a sense, political life in the country was stifled. There was no public debate, no political life, beyond the party's bureaucratic apparatus. Unlike the West, for example, where you have popular movements like the one of May of '68, in Bulgaria, like in most other Eastern European countries, such movements were not allowed to develop.

Were there some examples of self-organization in those gulags? Did anarchist prisoners develop some forms of resistance?

One thing that is positive in Bulgaria is that many of the anarchists that survived the gulags sat down afterwards and reflected upon it, writing memoirs. Some of them are even still alive today, like Georgi Konstantinov, who still, in his nineties, publishes anarchist essays. There are tens of such books by anarchists. And this is very important because it provides a different perspective from the dominant narratives. After all, you know, in Eastern European countries there is a lot of this revanchism coming from the right-wing, trying to present all the existing resistance to totalitarianism as coming from the right. And it is very, very important that there is this effort by these old anarchists to remind everyone that this was not the whole truth. That there were also popular and anti-authoritarian forms of resistance to the actually existing socialism. In these books, anarchists like Alexander Nakov and others describe life in these gulags and the mutual aid being practised by the anarchist prisoners. They shared everything inside, and that is why they had lower death rates than other political groups of prisoners. And this, despite the fact that anarchists were usually sent to the so-called "death units" in the gulags – that is, sent there to die.

The Bulgarian anarchists, although treated very inhumanely, had one another, and whatever package with food – this trope repeats in every memoir – was sent to one of them, it was immediately redistributed among all anarchist prisoners. It was one of the elements that managed to save many anarchists. It was mutual aid that they turned from an idea to practice in the harshest environment imaginable.

Many anarchists immigrated via Greece. What was the reaction of the Left there?

According to old comrades from Bulgaria – the ones that were in the gulags and later moved to Paris – there was not a lot of contact between Bulgarians and Greeks, because the Greeks were very strongly Marxist-Leninist in their majority. There were some Trotskyists. But the Communist Party of Greece had a paramilitary wing called the OPLA, which dealt with political assassinations, with Trotskyists high on the list of targets. For example, Cornelius Castoriadis managed to avoid being assassinated by this Communist Party's armed wing by sheer chance. He did not end up attending a meeting where he was invited, where he was planned to be killed. When he learned what he had avoided, he left for France.

But many Bulgarian anarchists did immigrate via Greece. Many of them were sent to a camp on the outskirts of the city of Lavrion. In it, there were not only anarchists, but also members of the agrarian party, as well as other political currents.

The food in the Lavrion camp was bad (as in any other refugee camp), but the anarchists quickly self-organized and asked the camp authorities to let them use the

resources that were allotted for food, so that they could form a self-organized canteen and take care of the process of feeding the people inside. Everyone was surprised when the camp administration agreed. With that, the anarchists chose a couple of volunteers to do the shopping, while the rest took over the cooking and cleaning and all kinds of ancillary work. In this way, the food was improved in both quality and quantity.

And regarding mutual aid, the situation was similar to that in the gulags I mentioned before. Whatever package was sent to any of the anarchists, it was immediately redistributed among them all. Because of this, Anton Nikolov, one of the anarchist refugees in the Lavrion camp, remembers in his memoirs how Dimitar Lozev, a senior member of the Agrarian Party, once said: "How come your friends are poor, but they send you aid, while our party partners in the West, if you shove them in the neck they will vomit coins, but they send us nothing."

Today, Bulgarian anarchists are sometimes criticized for siding with the West in the Cold War? Is this criticism inappropriate?

Well, I think it is inappropriate to say that about any anarchist movement. I think one such criticism comes from a dishonest perspective, which considers anyone who opposes actually existing socialism as an ally of the West.

There was an old generation of activists from the 1940s who were imprisoned or who were in exile. On Bulgarian territory, was there a rupture in activism or some continuity with activities after Stalinism?

Well, in a sense you can say that there was a rupture. And not only in Bulgaria! You can still feel the effects Stalinism had on Eastern Europe to this day. Because of this rupture, after the fall of totalitarianism, anarchists had only the classics for their theoretical basis. Newer ideas and tendencies that emerged during the second half of the 20th century were yet to find their way to Eastern Europe. Because of this, many anarchists find themselves still stuck in classic anarchism, which in my opinion is a problem. You cannot stick to dogmas. You have to develop. Conditions change, and societies change.

Fortunately, things have been changing for the better in recent years, with ideas related to feminism, social ecology, autonomy, etc. influencing libertarian tendencies in Eastern Europe.

But what was present in the early 1990s and could contribute to the recreation of anarchism in Bulgaria then?

There was a generation of anarchists in exile that were aging. When many of these anarchists returned from exile, they met younger anarchists who were emerging from the new punk subculture that was rebelling against the totalitarian regime and had

found itself in a new world. And so they both wanted to create something. Thus, these old-timers who returned from exile (many from Paris) renewed the functioning of the Federation of Anarchist-Communists of Bulgaria. But again, because of the Stalinist legacy that I mentioned before, they were forced to cut the "communist" from the title. So it became the Anarchist Federation of Bulgaria because they knew that having "communist" in the title would make most people associate them directly with the old regime. And so there was a mixture of younger punks and all these old veterans.

You can imagine that it was difficult for all those old Bakuninists and anarcho-communists almost from another century to coexist with the younger subcultural punkish anarchists. After some time, they started separating and creating different groups. In my personal opinion, having many tendencies is not necessarily a bad thing because it allows each group more manoeuvring to explore its full potential. In a sense, this gave rise to several social centres or alternative spaces in Sofia revolving around libertarian ideas.

The Stalinist past left a lot of trauma and also created a space for right-wing anti-communism.

A lot of time is needed for this trauma to heal. Some still blame communism for everything that's wrong in Bulgaria today, although the regime has been gone for more than 30 years and we have had capitalism all this time. And then there is a growing trend of nostalgia among conservatives, and even nationalists, for socialist-era Bulgaria. These tendencies have both been pushing narratives that glorify either the West or the East.

There is also a problem of understanding the Stalinist legacy, because of a certain liberal approach which attempts to compare Stalin to Hitler. It seeks to answer the wrong question – that is, who is the bigger monster? Instead, I would argue that they were both very damaging in different ways.

Hitler provided humanity with one of the worst ideologies – if not the worst ideology – humanity has ever know, the idea that you can shift the blame for the problems of a given people to one specific ethnic and/or religious group and imply industrial means to wipe it off the face of the Earth. This idea is monstrous to its very core, and in this sense, the Nazis were much worse than the Stalinists.

But in regards to the revolutionary project, it is Stalinism that has served the most severe blows, from which humanity still cannot recover. It was Stalinist regimes that committed brutalities and horrors in the name of a classless society. All the gulags and persecutions were done in the name of Revolution. All the repressions were done under the banner of "power to the people". And in this sense, Stalinism sent humanity down a spiral of growing cynicism. As a result, societies worldwide have come to perceive what currently exists as the only plausible option, the other being the dictatorship of a narrow commissariat. And anti-authoritarians and anarchists are often perceived by common people as crypto-Stalinists when they talk about revolution and radical

social change. And especially in Eastern Europe, if you go and speak about people assemblies and popular councils to random people on the street you may be countered by the argument that the old regime also spoke of these things, while imposing the firmest grip on power. So, in this sense, Stalinism has done more harm. Things are not irreversible, though; they can be changed. But it takes time, patience, and the will to seek new ways to communicate these ideas with the widest possible sections of society.

Thank you very much for telling me these fascinating stories about Bulgarian anarchism. What lessons can we learn from these stories? Do you think that they provide us some ideas for contemporary debates, for example about the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and the position of the left?

I think one lesson that we can take is that in pivotal moments it is important for anti-authoritarian and libertarian tendencies, be they anarchist or not, to be present and to take action as long as society is involved and as long as there is a space for independent activity. This is what the anarchists in Bulgaria understood very well. They were open, they were quite social, without abandoning their principles, and they managed to plant certain seeds that can still serve as a beacon of hope in a region such as the Balkans, which nowadays is dominated by nationalism and conservative sentiments.

I read a text by a Finnish anarchist named Antti Rautiainen, in which he argues that this idea that anarchists should never participate in wars is relatively new. In the histories of Finland, of Korea, of the Balkans, anarchists took part on certain occasions. For example, during the First Balkan War, in 1912, Mihail Gerdzhikov, about whom we spoke at length above, led a guerrilla group against the Ottomans on Strandzha Mountain, but was unsuccessful in provoking the local populace to establish a popular commune.

I think it is important for libertarian and anarchist tendencies to participate wherever there is space for autonomous action within social upheavals, because ultimately these are clashes of ideas and political projects.

I think it is crucial that we listen to the voices of social movements and grassroots activists from each locality. In regards to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we must take into serious consideration that so many anarchists have decided to resist the invasion (resistance takes many different forms) because they believe an occupation by Putin's regime would limit their space for social action. No one outside of this geography can know how successful these anarchists can be at provoking social change along libertarian lines and values. I know that their strength is very limited, but nonetheless it is through persistent work that alternative visions are planted in the social imagination. Otherwise, the inaction of these tendencies will leave societies imprisoned by the dead end of the dipole of liberalism vs chauvinism. A dead end because both sides end up reproducing each other. We need to offer a third alternative, a libertarian one.

Do you think that these stories also tell us something about the relationship between libertarian ideas and movements, nationalism, and internationalism?

They show that there cannot be a society where libertarian and autonomous ideas coexist with nationalism. Nationalism is their opposite. It tends to go somewhere else. Even in its most "progressive" form, nationalism will eventually prove a conservative obstacle to internationalism and transnationalism.

That is why I think that nowadays the re-emergence of this libertarian municipalist and social ecologist tendency is so important. This idea of returning to the political municipality and moving beyond the nation. We are not patriots of this nation but citizens of a communal body politic. One important example in this direction is the Paris Commune, as reconstructed by Kristin Ross's *Communal Luxury*. She shows how the sections that were created by the monarchy to be a body where the people speak and the monarch could listen, turned into rebellious popular assemblies. This new political framework led the citizens of Paris to abandon the bourgeois terms *Madame* and *Monsieur* when referring to each other. Instead, they started calling each other *citoyen* and *citoyenne* – that is, citizen. Through such small details, we get to see how the communards attempted to put an end, on the one hand, to the nation, which homogenizes everyone, and then, on the other, to bourgeois capitalist society. Consequently, they were not the exclusive "citizens", as the term has been used, in the sense of who is a citizen of this country and who is not, but in the sense of people who take an active part in the direct self-management of society. This idea has also been developed by other 20th-century thinkers like Murray Bookchin and Cornelius Castoriadis.

We started with the idea of the Balkan Federation, and you described how it was developed in the 19th century and we heard how it was renewed many times during the 20th century. Some people consider the bloody Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s as the end of the idea. Do you think that there is some legacy of the idea of the Balkan Federation which can be somehow renewed and told today?

The Communist parties of the region tainted this idea very much and charged it with very negative connotations. For 19th-century revolutionaries, a Balkan Federation was a way to achieve radical equality between diverse ethnic groups on the peninsula that would also allow them to remain independent on the broader geopolitical map of the world. Later on, it became a tool used by different political regimes to try to take over smaller and weaker countries, and claim some form of decentralization and diversity. However, the Yugoslav Federation was in fact a Serbia-centred federation. Also, often when Bulgarian politicians expressed this idea, it was again with the scope of incorporating Macedonian territories into the Bulgarian sphere of influence. I think one of the fears that people have on the peninsula nowadays is that a Balkan Federation would mean the loss of any kind of ethnic sovereignty and subjugation to another country.

For me, the project of the Balkan Federation is immensely important, but it must not be thought of as a federation of nation-states. It should rather be thought of as a federation of independent, ideally self-organized cantons, similar to the system developed by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (more widely known as Rojava). One such context will actually allow all these diverse peoples to come together, without losing their cultural specifities to the homogenous effects of the Nation-State, and discuss how they should manage their life in common.

I have lived in two countries that were on the opposite sides of the Iron Curtain – Greece and Bulgaria – and I have seen that despite that, they have much more in common than they would like to admit, in spite of all differences in languages, history, geopolitics. And this holds true for the rest of the peninsula as well. I think one such project could bring these people to recognize these similarities without abandoning their specificities.

What we need is to re-read our histories and detect those political projects that can get us away from self-destructive nationalist paradigms and towards contexts that allow for the widest possible social participation and diversity.

IN MEMORIAM

NICOLAS TRIFON

A Franco-Romanian Aromanian Anarchist

Bogdan Rusu

Abstract

This paper highlights the activity and ideas of Nicolas Trifon (1949–2023), an anarchist of Romanian birth and Aromanian ethnicity who lived and was politically active in France. Trifon contributed to the ideological debates of the 1970s and to the coordination of many autonomous militants and of several autonomous groups that did not fit in within the extant organisations, aligning then into an organisational structure of anarcho-communist orientation. He also represented the anarchist opposition to the so-called "communist" regime of Ceaușescu, and was one of the main representatives of the libertarian critique of the Eastern regimes generally. Lastly, he was an activist for the rights of Aromanians, and formulated an interesting hypothesis about their deliberate refusal to become a nation – a refusal that could point anarchists towards finding a solution to the tension between anti-statism and ethnic attachment.

Keywords

Nicolas Trifon, Organisation Combat Anarchiste, anarchism, anti-statism, anti-capitalism, state capitalism, Iztok, Aromanians

Nicolas Trifon (1949–2023) was an anarchist militant and theorist who was born in Romania and whose activity took place in France. In the first phase of his activity, Trifon made little-known, but not unimportant, uncredited contributions to the anarcho-communist ideological debates in France. As soon as he could sign his papers, Trifon embodied by himself the anarchist opposition to the regime of Ceaușescu. His voice, although less resounding than those of the liberal-capitalist opponents to "communism", was nevertheless heard in the Francophone anarchist circles throughout Europe. Through his writings, notably in the journal he directed between 1983 and

1991, *Iztok: revue libertaire sur les pays de l'Est*, and through his radio shows, Trifon diffused a genuinely anarchist reading of the Eastern European reality, particularly the Romanian one. He was also very interested in the workers' movements of opposition to the Eastern regimes, and particularly in the emergence of a new, free trade unionism, which he saw as the vector of an authentic aspiration to social change, and thus of an authentic opposition to "socialism". After the fall of "communism" in the Eastern bloc, Trifon became an astute analyst of post-"communism" and a sharp critic of the various political and social anti-democratic, particularly nationalist, trends emerging in the new Eastern societies. The topic of the relationship between state and nation led him to take an interest in the Republic of Moldova, which became one of his domains of expertise.[1] Another such domain was the history and current political status of the Aromanian people,[2] to which he belonged through his father. Although he was a man of many talents, the present paper will only sketch a portrait of Nicolas Trifon the anarchist.

Early Politicization and Anti-conformism

Nicolas Trifon was born in Bucharest to a family with Transylvanian and Aromanian roots. His Transylvanian ancestors, belonging to the small nobility, had been involved in the political struggles of the Austro-Hungarian Romanians since the 1848 Revolution.[3] At the turn of the twentieth century, they were prominent figures of the socialist movement in that part of the Empire. His maternal grandfather, Eugen Rozvan, was one of the founders of the Communist Party of Romania in 1921, who was later executed in Moscow during the Great Purge, accused of espionage.[4] Trifon's paternal ancestors were prominent Aromanian businessmen who settled in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Trifon studied Romanic philology at the University of Bucharest, from 1967 to 1972. At the end of his freshman year, he took a trip to Prague,[5] where he remained until the 20th of August, one day before the tanks of the Warsaw Pact crushed the Prague

[1] Matei Cazacu & Nicolas Trifon, *La Moldavie ex-soviétique: historie et enjeux actuels, suivie de Notes sur les Aroumains en Grèce, Macédoine et Albanie* (La Bussière: Acratie, 1993); Matei Cazacu & Nicolas Trifon, *La République de Moldavie, un Etat en quête de nation* (Paris: Non Lieu, 2010).

[2] Nicolas Trifon, *Les Aroumains, un peuple qui s'en va* (Paris: Non Lieu, 2005; 2nd edition 2013); Nicolas Trifon, *Unde e Aromânia? Intervenții, dezbateri, cronici 1994-2014* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2014) [Where is Aromania? Interventions, debates, chronicles 1994-2014]; *Aromâna – dialect al limbii române sau limbă de sine stătătoare? Istoria unei controverse* (București: Vremea, 2023) [Aromanian – dialect of the Romanian language, or self-standing language? The history of a controversy], and numerous journal articles.

[3] There is one monograph with abundant details concerning the history of Trifon's maternal family (Lemeny): Doina Anca Rădoi-Dâmboian, Mihai Dâmboianu, *Ion Bran Pop de Lemény et Kozla: "un stejar falnic bătrân"* (2nd edition, s.e., 2019).

[4] There is also a monograph on Rozvan, who was rehabilitated in Romania in the 1960s: Iuliu Szikszay, Marin Popa, Ion Bulei: *Eugen Rozvan* (București: Editura Politică, 1971).

[5] Nicolas Trifon, *Oublier Cioran & Cie, chroniques roumaine* (Paris: Non Lieu, 2021), p. 253.

Spring. In Prague, he discovered that the Communist Party did not have a monopoly on revolutionism. One could oppose the Party and still be a revolutionary, and not an anti-revolutionary, reactionary, or fascist. This insight, the experience of street "fraternity" in Prague, and the fortuitous discovery of such books as Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (in Italian translation), contributed to Trifon's politicization "in a completely new way, practically with no relation to the Romanian political culture".[6]

However, his opposition to "communism" could not take a political form, as the Party did not tolerate any dissidence. Instead, he chose a civil form of opposition, the anti-conformism. Being an anti-conformist meant defying, although rather prudently, the "socialist norms of coexistence": growing long hair, wearing a beard,[7] avoiding waged labour as much as possible, siding with thugs, and even engaging in petty criminality. This marginal life was not free of risks, since it could be seen as "social parasitism", which, according to its gravity, was considered either a contravention or a delict[8] and could lead to prison sentences.[9] Trifon himself made the newspapers, in 1970, accused of being a hippie, a sad example of a university student indulging in anti-conformism, instead of working to build a multilaterally developed socialist society in Romania.[10]

[6] *Nicolas Trifon un parcurs libertar internaționalist. Interviuri* [N. Trifon, a libertarian internationalist itinerary. Interviews] (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini libere, 2020), p. 10.

[7] Facial hair was always an issue in Romania. During the Middle Ages, only noblemen, priests, and monks were allowed to grow beards. The size of the beard depended on the social status of the owner: the higher the social rank, the longer the beard. In the early 1990s, when the present writer was in high school, long hair or any facial hair was still strictly forbidden in secondary schools.

[8] A decree from 1970 was used to sentence many marginals who were not criminals to prison, next to barflies, prostitutes, gamblers, pimps, and crooks of all sorts. A law from 1976 allowed the sentencing of the "parasites" to forced labour. The law was used against some of those who joined Paul Goma's movement for human rights in 1977. See Flori Bălănescu, *Grup Canal 77. Paraziții sociali și Mișcarea Goma pentru drepturile omului. Studiu de caz* [Group Canal 77: The Social Parasites and the Goma Movement for Human Rights. A Case Study] (Oradea: Ratio et revelatio, 2015).

[9] Several philosophy and sociology students, led by Cezar Mititelu, who graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bucharest, abandoned their studies and refused to work. They were perceived as anti-conformists, and the Department of State Security took measures to disband their group. Mititelu and two others were sentenced to prison as social parasites. See Peter Rațiu, *Cezar Mititelu – omul care a trăit în socialism* [Cezar Mititelu: The Man Who Lived in Socialism] (București: Eikon, 2018); also Bogdan Rusu, "Cinismul și socialismul multilateral dezvoltat" [Cynicism and multilaterally developed socialism], in: ed. Cristian Iftode & Cristian Voinea, *Critică, marginalitate, cinism* [Criticism, Marginality, Cynicism] (București: Editura Universității din București, 2017), pp. 83–118.

[10] Nicolas Trifon, "Être 'social-hippy' dans la Roumanie de Ceaușescu" [Being a "social hippy" in Ceaușescu's Romania], Le Courrier des Balkans, June 10, 2020, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Etre-social-hippy-dans-la-Roumanie-de-Ceausescu; "Câteva observații cu privire la dificultatea de a-ți exprima politic revolta în România comunistă" [A few remarks concerning the difficulty of giving revolt a political expression in communist Romania] (interview with M. Codreanu), in: *N. Trifon un parcurs libertar. Interviuri*, pp. 7–16.

Fortunately, there were no other consequences. Trifon married a French woman and managed to leave the country.

A Militant Anti-statism

Trifon arrived in Paris before the spring of 1976,[11] and it didn't take long before he made contact with anarchists. After May '68, the French anarchist movement had reverted to life, and it was characterised by powerful ideological oppositions between three major factions. The most ancient organisation in activity was Fédération Anarchiste (F.A.), which had adopted Faure's anarchist synthesis of anarchist socialism, anarcho-communism, and individualist anarchism. Over the years, it underwent multiple scissions. Some of the dissidents, mainly anarcho-communists, were inspired by Arshinov's platform. In the mid-1970s, the main platformist organisations were Organisation Révolutionnaire Anarchiste (O.R.A.) and Organisation Communiste Libertaire (O.C.L.). The third anarchist trend, rapidly losing popularity, was spontaneism. There was a plethora of autonomous groupuscules, refusing all organisations and all programs, and united only in their rejection of the existent order. They emerged in the milieu of the marginals, which one historian describes as follows:

> The better part of the militants are "marginals". [...] Starting from the constatation that "labour is an alienation"... some conclude that the best way of avoiding alienation ... is not working! The best means to avoid working is to assemble in communities or semi-communities, where each member brings his economies. Next, the "community" will try to deal with its financial problems by means of temporary work, craftsmanship ... or schemes![12]

Once in France, Trifon engaged in the social struggles that marked the beginning of Giscard d'Estaing's presidency, following his anti-immigration and austerity measures. During street protests leading to confrontations with the forces of order, he met a number of autonomous anarchists, and former members of the Groupe d'Action Révolutionnaire

[11] The public version is that Trifon "settled in France" in 1977. However, a family member stated to me that Trifon had been in France at least since the preceding year. In an interview from 1990, Trifon himself said that, in December 1989 he was gone for 14 years. See Interview with Nicolas Trifon, *Lutter!*, no. 29–30 (1990), p. 15. There are further separate reasons to believe that he was active as an anarchist militant in 1975. That he "settled in France" in 1977 could mean that until then he was somewhat vagrant, moving between France and Germany, where his mother lived. Initially, he must have had a tourist visa, which did not allow him to work. He took small jobs, unreported, and was very discrete about it. He participated in anarchist activities under a false name (Bruno) and never signed anything he wrote. Apparently, in 1977 he managed to regularize his status, obtained a "titre de séjour" allowing him to enlist in a doctoral program at EHESS and to work legally, and afterward he signed his papers.

[12] Roland Biard, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste 1945–1975* (Paris: Galilée, 1976), p. 224.

Internationaliste (G.A.R.I.).[13] They formed spontaneous and transitory "affinity groups", perhaps reminding Trifon of his previous entourage in Bucharest. Ideologically, things were very loose. Many in that milieu rejected any doctrine and any organisational principle. Some had concluded that militantism itself was alienating, so they refused to struggle for anything. However, some autonomous militants felt that ideological clarification and more efficacious coordination were necessary. This was the case with the members of Coordination Anarchiste (C.A.),[14] who rejected extreme spontaneism, while conceding the largest autonomy and initiative to each of the composing groups. Trifon joined such a group. As he was a university graduate, and he had studied Marxism for many years as a mandatory academic discipline, he rapidly assumed the status of group intellectual. He tried to formulate the kind of anarchism that he favoured, which could federate the greatest possible number of autonomous anarchists, hostile to the principal extant anarchist organisations, but looking for more than just sporadic spontaneous gestures of revolt. Nicolas Trifon spoke for the organisational tendency, which will eventually cause the restructuring of C.A., and the emergence, as its successor, of Organisation Combat Anarchiste (O.C.A.) in April 1976.

Several unsigned texts in the last issues of *Confrontation anarchiste* seem to belong to Trifon.[15] One of them is a review of Pierre Clastres's recently published *La société contre l'État*,[16] a work of enduring influence on Trifon's thought. He was among the first anarchists to conceptualise anarchy along Clastres's lines – not as a society without a state, but as a stateless society consciously struggling against the state. The last issue of *Confrontation anarchiste*[17] announced that C.A. had accepted, at the general assembly held in Orléans, the necessity of class struggle, of a revolutionary practice leading to the autonomy and radicalisation of the workers, and of jointly fighting statism and capitalism. Its ideology was then purely anarcho-communist, organisational, and it was formulated in classical Marxist-Leninist jargon. The brief inaugural statement included, through the phrase "state apparatus", an indirect reference to Althusser's paper, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses".[18] This text was another one of Tri-

[13] Guillaume Davranche, "Nicolas Trifon", *Le Maitron. Dictionnaire des anarchistes*, accessed October 13, 2023, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article156849.

[14] Created in 1971 by some F.A. dissident groups. See Roland Biard, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste*, p. 225; Biard confounds the name of the organisation with the title of its journal, *Confrontation anarchiste.*

[15] Trifon affirms that he had papers in the publications of C.A., which further confirms that he was in France and engaging in militant activitys before April 1976. See *Nicolas Trifon un parcurs libertar internaționalist*, p. 44.

[16] Nicolas Trifon, "Société sans Etat – société à Etat", *Confrontation anarchiste,* no. 28 (1975), pp. 4–5.

[17] *Confrontation Anarchiste*, no. 30 (1976).

[18] Louis Althusser, "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état", *La pensée*, no. 151 (1970), pp. 3–38.

fon's favourites. Trifon declared on several occasions[19] that he had written, for O.C.A., a manifesto called *Landmarks of a Militant Anti-statism*,[20] which, once mimeographed, was widely circulated and became popular. He also stated that the manifesto was inspired by Althusser's previously mentioned paper. Fortunately, the ideological part of the manifesto was included in the same issue of *Confrontation anarchiste*.[21]

The manifesto has a clear Marxist flavour. It is quite interesting that anarchism is conceived, in an obvious parallel to communism, as defined in *The German Ideology*, not as a movement aiming at the realisation of an ideal (the state of anarchy), but as a convergence of revolutionary practices – that is, of concrete ways of contesting and resisting the state and capitalism, vectors of revolutionary social change, "local" ways of living containing the potential for synergy and generalization. The anarchist movement is not representative of anything, unlike a political party; its intention is not to represent the oppressed and alienated, but to federate them; anarchists do not speak and act on anybody's behalf but their own.

The critical analysis of capitalism is orthodoxly Marxist, and so is the proposed way out – the socialization of the means of production – up to a point. Trifon insists on the meaning of this "socialization". In rendering this notion more precise, Trifon aims to dispel the confusion deliberately entertained by the authoritarian communists, who demagogically claimed that such socialisation was conducted by the states of the Eastern bloc. Trifon's belief that Eastern so-called "socialism" was a form of state capitalism is already recognizable in *Landmarks*. According to Trifon, the means of production merely changed proprietor; the state expropriated the bourgeois in order to take their place. Or the idea of socialisation of the means of production includes, in addition to the expropriation of the bourgeois, the self-governance of the workers using the means of production: "It is incumbent to the workers themselves to decide collectively, in a direct democracy, in coordination, on the new production conditions".[22] Collective self-governance entails, as a condition of possibility, the maximization of the individual and group autonomy. This can only be achieved by constantly fighting authority at all levels. Ultimately, collective generalised self-governance has as its condition of possibility the disappearance of the state. As Trifon characteristically says, "Anti-capitalism is not revolutionary without anti-statism, and vice-versa".[23] Thus, there cannot

[19] *Nicolas Trifon: un parcurs libertar international. Interviuri*, p. 21 (interview with Anarhia); and p. 32 (interview with Anarhiva).

[20] From now on abridged as *Landmarks*.

[21] See "Repères pour un anti-étatisme militant. Coordination anarchiste", *Confrontation Anarchiste*, no. 30 (1976), pp. 8–54. The purely organisational proposals were not retained. I have been unable to track any copy of the complete manifesto. Some older militants remember it, but nobody seems to possess it anymore.

[22] "Repères pour un anti-étatisme militant", p. 16.

[23] "Repères pour un anti-étatisme militant", p. 16.

be two complementary lines of action but rather a single combat with two inseparable aspects – and this is the essence of "libertarian communism".

The critique of the state rests on Althusser's concept of "state apparatus". The state is the "common denominator" or the "common matrix" of all apparatuses: army, police, government, prison, family, school, church, mass media, party, trade union, and so on. These institutions are systems of norms, coercively imposed by the state and serving the interests of some minoritarian social class. The question is, how can the majority break free from these institutions without instituting, in turn, similar systems of oppressive norms, as happened in the so-called "socialist" states from the Eastern bloc? The answer is, by establishing a society where everybody is at once law-maker and law-abider, where laws are revocable, and where laws are dictated by real interests, and not vice versa. Finally, in this society, every attempt by a minority to monopolise law-making should encounter the vigorous opposition of the entire society. Trifon's answer combines classical anarchist views on direct democracy and perpetual revisability of the laws with a Clastres-inspired perspective. He writes:

> This does not mean a society without a state, like some idyllic projects have envisaged, nor one inspired by the society existing before the apparition of the state, but a society against the state. This society cannot be uniquely the product of a bloody and full-of-barricades night of revolution, but that of a revolutionary process. The society against the state will never be instituted, will never be institutionally set up (it would be a statist project). Its maintaining will be the fruit of the society's incessant struggles, which will constitute the sole guaranty of the realization of free individuals and collectives.[24]

Thus, libertarian communism is unthinkable in the absence of a constant struggle to identify the perpetually nascent statist tendencies, the velleities to occupy, more or less deviously, the seat of the power, and to defuse them or fight them off.

How is the state to be fought from the perspective of its abolition? The answer draws again on Althusser's distinction between state power and state apparatuses. Different strategies are required for different apparatuses. One will not fight the army in the same way one fights the Church. The combat against the army begins, for example, by the refusal of mandatory military service. Combat against the police must focus on the denunciation of its "contradictions" and of its repressive abuses, and on discrediting it in order to put into perspective the importance of the role it claims to play in the society. The anarchists must, in fighting the police, pay attention not to imitate the police and to absorb the statist and repressive structure of this institution. Trifon suggests that in the process of fighting, the main repressive force of the state, while avoiding

[24] "Repères pour un anti-étatisme militant", p. 20.

the pitfall of mirroring it, the anarchists have the opportunity to discover the germs of the "self-defending structure of the future society".[25] Generally, the combat against one of the state's apparatuses is not purely negative, but also positive, in that it allows for the creation of new practices and the discovery of alternative solutions, on the spot, in the heat of the action.

Chapter 5 of "Landmarks" approaches the organisational problem. The title effectively discloses its content: "For an anarchist class and of organisational content coordination". Anarchists should enter the class struggle on the side of the oppressed; in the class struggle, they must have a revolutionary practice, aiming to ignite the class war; and test, in battle, diverse organisational structures as potential bases of a future communist society. C.A. should acquire a more marked class character, and an "organisational content" as well. Farewell, spontaneism! Unfortunately, the "organisational proposals" of Trifon, intended to flesh out this content, were left out of the journal, and Trifon did not return to them in other texts.

Growing in popularity, the manifesto became a serious candidate for the job of ideological platform of C.A. At the General Assembly in Orléans, it defeated a rival manifesto, *Theoretical Basis for a Libertarian Strategy*, which promoted a non-Marxist, but rather eclectic conception, accommodating Stirner, Freud, Nietzsche, and Proudhon next to Marx and … Pavlov. Class struggle was rejected in the name of a Proudhonian analysis of alienation, yielding a strategy to be adopted by anarchists, the enforcing of the "centripetal" social forces in order to counter the predominance of the "centrifugal" forces. The rejection of this manifesto, causing its supporters to leave C.A., marked the victory of Trifon as an anarchist ideologue. The new organisation, O.C.A., existed until 1979, when it merged with the Union des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires (U.T.C.L.), originally a faction of O.R.A., expelled in 1976. Trifon was one of the three negotiators mandated by O.C.A. The resulting organisation kept the name U.T.C.L. But Trifon, judging it "too workerist", chose not to join it.

While it existed, O.C.A. published the journal *Lutter*.[26] Trifon claimed that he was charged with writing it.[27] The conception from *Landmarks* is summarised in the first issue, under the heading "Why 'Lutter'",[28] in a way that leaves no doubt about the author of the article. Many other articles from the six issues of *Lutter*, embodying the same standpoint and written in the same style, can be reasonably attributed to Trifon.

[25] "Repères pour un anti-étatisme militant", p. 33.

[26] *Lutter* became *Lutter!* and continued to be published by U.T.C.L. between 1982 and 1991.

[27] *Nicolas Trifon: un parcurs libertar international. Interviuri*, p. 21 (interview with M. Codreanu, 2012); p. 44 (interview with Anarhiva, 2020). The implication is that he *alone* wrote the materials in the 6 published issues of *Lutter*.

[28] O.C.A., "Pourquoi 'Lutter'", *Lutter*, no. 1 (1977), pp. 13–14.

Anarchism, the East, and *Iztok*

In 1977, Trifon became a doctoral student in sociolinguistics at École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales Paris. His research focused on the political cant in Romania. He wrote a PhD dissertation, *Des blagues: masses parlantes and rhétorique (marxiste-léniniste) de pouvoir* [On jokes: talking masses and (Marxist-Leninist) rhetoric of power], which he defended in 1983. The dissertation examined the political jokes and cant of the "socialist" bloc. Many of Trifon's papers from this period have counterparts in sections or chapters of the dissertation. He used jokes and incidents reported in the small news columns of official newspapers in order to expose the image of reality painted on the front pages and in the main columns as fake. Moreover, he wanted to show the existence, within the "socialist" societies, of some concrete practices of opposition to the official order. For example, in the first paper he signed, Trifon translated several minor news items, all about various acts of dilapidation or work-related law-breaking by working men, to conclude:

> Not entering the process which the bureaucracy controls, small news incidents are often signs of a social process of which the bureaucracy is definitely the cause, but which runs contrary to it. The desertion of the production, the appropriation of the work product, the hijacking of the work instrument, but also the revolt against family, school, or women's condition, are forms of struggle that prove a constant questioning of the statist bureaucracy, of its production and of its institutions. [29]

Trifon's avowed aim was to stimulate, by allowing the Occidental anarchist to catch a glimpse of the Eastern workers' struggle against statist "socialism", the emergence of an authentic solidarity between Western and Eastern workers, instead of the existing "charity" and "perplexity" of the Gulags.

To some extent, he managed to draw the French anarchists' attention to the Eastern workers' anti-regime struggles. Articles about the persecution of trade unionists by the Eastern regimes appeared not only in *Iztok*, but also in other anarchist media, where Trifon had contacts. U.T.C.L. had supported the Eastern workers' dissent movements as early as 1978. Support meetings were organised, with the participation of important dissidents, like V. Borisov and V. Fainberg.[30] The journal of the organisation, *Tout le pouvoir aux travailleurs*, featured in 1981 an article on Vasile Paraschiv,[31] a Romanian persecuted for having created the S.L.O.M.R.[32] in early 1978. A former militant witnesses

[29] "Faits divers et socialisme", *Interrogations revue internationale de recherche anarchiste*, no. 10 (1977), p. 22.

[30] The event took place in Nov. 1980.

[31] "Exigeons la verité sur le sort de Paraschiv", *Tout le pouvoir aux travailleurs*, no. 37 (1981), p. 8.

[32] Romanian acronym for Free Trade-Union of the Working People from Romania.

that "everything started thanks to Nicolas Trifon, a former O.C.A. militant who was animating *Iztok*. He was passing to U.T.C.L. confidential information on the clandestine trade unions that could exist in the East, like S.M.O.T. in the U.S.S.R."[33] Another militant confirms: "Thanks to *Iztok*, we could establish contact with quite a few exiled dissidents, like Leonid Plyushch, Viktor Fainberg, Vladimir Borisov of S.M.O.T."[34] U.T.C.L. further expressed solidarity with Solidarność, in 1981, and organised a colloquium around the workers' resistance to state capitalism (April 4–5, the same year).

The influence of *Iztok* and of Trifon personally was by no means limited to the actions of U.T.C.L. The journal, which featured samizdat materials in French translation; interviews with Eastern dissidents; social, political, and cultural chronicles and analyses; and theoretical texts, reached a wide audience in France and abroad. *Iztok* was a priceless source of information on the workers' movements and protests behind the Iron Curtain and a tribune for an anarchist critique of the Eastern regimes. The journal was hailed in many libertarian publications, of all persuasions.

The first issues of the French version of *Iztok*, originally published in Bulgarian by N. Tchorbadieff and N. Tengerkov, comrades of T. Mitev (1926–2002), featured materials on the history of the anarchist movement in the East, in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Eastern Germany, as well as China, obviously aiming to disclose the existence of unknown comrades behind the Iron Curtain and to stimulate solidarity with them. Among those who signed articles in the first issues of *Iztok*, there were some well-known Balkan dissidents, like Slobodan Drakulić (1947–2010) and Georgi Markov (1929–1978).

Once Trifon became the publishing director, the journal acquired a slightly different character. The history of anarchism was less present, but not altogether absent: the Yugoslavian scholar Laslo Sekelj (1949–2001) signed a paper on "Bakunin and Lenin".[35] In contrast, the journal was imbued with topicality. Czechoslovakia, Poland, the U.S.S.R., and Romania were given considerable attention. The Solidarność phenomenon was the main topic of two *Iztok* issues, and periodically there was news ("news from the front") about the clandestine libertarian movement in Poland and elsewhere. Several important members of Solidarność wrote papers or gave interviews: Karol Modzelewski (1937–2019), the one who came up with name, the co-signer of the famous open letter to the Party from 1965; and Piotr Chruszczyński (1952–2002), who was by then in France. Exiled Czech dissidents were also present: the noted Marxist philosopher and sociologist Lubomir Sochor (1925–1986), who lived in France, published a paper on the

[33] Daniel Goude in Guillaume Davranche, "Entretien avec douze vétéran.es: 'L'U.T.C.L., un ouvriérisme à visage humain!'", *Union Communiste Libertaire*, September 26, 2023, www.union-communistelibertaire.org/?Entretien-avec-douze-veteran-es-L-UTCL-un-ouvrierisme-a-visage-humain#nh19.

[34] Thierry Renard, in Guillaume Davranche "Entretien avec douze vétéran.es: 'L'U.T.C.L., un ouvriérisme à visage humain!'".

[35] Laslo Sekelj, "Bakounine et Lenine", *Iztok*, no. 9 (1984), pp. 14–17.

reception of the Polish events,[36] and Jaroslav Suk, a former member of the clandestine Revolutionary Youth Movement, and a signatory of Charter '77, now in Sweden, wrote a paper on the radical left in Czechoslovakia.[37] Soviet dissidents were also present. Alexander Skobov, a member of S.M.O.T., twice interned by a judge order in a psychiatric hospital, having one of his samizdat texts published in *Iztok*.[38] The journal also covered events in China, and the emergence of a new order in Romania, in the first months after the fall of Ceaușescu.

It appears that Trifon intended to publish a Romanian version of *Iztok*. In 1981, a booklet titled *Iztok / Răsărit*, and bearing on the front cover the number 1, was published. This first issue did not circulate, unfortunately, in Romania, and was not followed by another. As there were no other Romanians in the publishing collective of *Iztok*, Trifon was very likely the author of the anarchist manifesto, signed Ion Ion, which constitutes the most important part of the content. It is the only anarchist text in Romanian to be published in over 40 years. Trifon's name, however, appears in *Iztok* only starting in 1982. His publications are diverse: interviews with Paul Goma, Alexandru Danciu (on the "gipsy problem in the East"), Smaranda Mezei (on the women's status in "socialist" Romania), and Maximilien Rubel (on Eastern Marxism); studies of the workers' movements and free trade unionism (in Poland, Russia, and Romania); critiques of statist "socialism" from China to Ethiopia; analyses of the situation in Romania, both before and after the fall of Ceaușescu; and so on.

Eastern Trade Unionism as a Workers' Movement against State "Socialism"

In the early 1980s Trifon became a well-known anarchist militant, participating in international anarchist colloquiums, like the one held in Venice in 1984 and the one in Lyon that same year. His interventions and publications from 1984 are highly relevant to his overall concerns and views.

In Venice, he gave a talk called "Trade Unionism: Revolutionary in the Real Socialism?"[39] In this study, Trifon compares the Western trade unions, the official Party-dependent Eastern trade unions, and the new independent trade unions. While the Western trade unions, stuck in reformism, are characterised by their ability to manage work-related social conflicts, thus being indispensable to the states, the Eastern official trade unions prevent and defuse all such social conflicts and are thus organs of repression, equally indispensable to the states. By comparison, the new independent trade unions have a revolutionary allure (particularly Solidarność). The very incapacity of the Eastern regimes

[36] Lubomir Sochor, "L'ambivalence des réactions face aux événements polonais", *Iztok*, no. 5bis (1982), pp. 32–35.

[37] Jaroslav Suk, "La gauche radicale en Tchécoslovaquie", *Iztok*, no. 6 (1983), pp. 23–28.

[38] Alexander Skobov, "Ils ne passeront pas", *Iztok*, no. 7 (1983), pp. 35–38.

[39] Nicolas Trifon, "Le syndicalisme: révolutionnaire dans le socialisme réel", in *Anarcho-syndicalisme et luttes ouvrières*, (Lyon: ACL, 1985), pp. 87–99.

to integrate them conferred them an involuntary "revolutionary vocation". These trade unions are revolutionary in the sense that they are, by their very existence, a threat to the political regimes of the respective countries. However, the revolution which the free trade unions carry is not political, but social. Solidarność's revendications (economic equalitarianism, direct democracy, direct action) and principles (self-governance, political independence) bring it close to revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism. Nevertheless, according to Trifon, the trade union had ceased to be revolutionary when it became autonomous with respect to the social movement which it helped to create and on which it relied. The split caused the movement to weaken, and the trade union was not a match any longer for the state. Trifon concluded reluctantly, however, that trade unionism could be the vector of social revolution in the East.

Critique of Statist "Socialism"

At Lyon, Trifon spoke of "The really existent totalitarianism".[40] This text should be read in relation to two others. The first is Rubel's "The really inexistent socialism".[41] The "real socialism", or "really existing socialism" is a catchphrase for the social order of the countries belonging to the Eastern bloc. Rubel, an acquaintance of Trifon's, argued, from a Marxian standpoint, that what is really existent in this part of the world is not socialism and that Soviet socialism is really inexistent. The author of *Marx, Theoretician of Anarchism*[42] was a brilliant scholar who had proclaimed the incompatibility between Marx and Marxism. He fought to restore an understanding of Marx based on his texts, purged of all Engelsian intervention. Trifon's booklet from 1984, *Marx in the East*,[43] originally a chapter from his PhD dissertation, opens with a reference to the really inexistent socialism. In 1982 Trifon had interviewed Rubel at Radio Libertaire, and had published the interview under the title "Marx in the East".[44] Some of the questions he asked Rubel bear on constatations he will develop in the above-mentioned booklet. Namely, he asked Rubel to comment on the fact that in all "popular democracies" the power was invoking Marx, and to explain why those opposing the power had ceased referring to Marx. Trifon argues, in a Rubelian spirit, that Marxism-Leninism abusively confounds Marx, Engels, and Lenin, benefitting also from the fact that the works of reputed Marxologists, such as Rubel, are unknown to the Eastern public. Trifon studies

[40] Nicolas Trifon, "Le totalitarisme réellement existant", in *Colloque autour du pouvoir. Lyon 12 & 13 mai 84* (Lyon: IRL – Atelier de création libertaire, 1984), pp. 7–11.

[41] Maximilien Rubel, "Le socialisme réellement inexistant", *Le Monde*, September 17, 1980.

[42] Rubel's study, initially published in *L'Europe en formation*, no. 163–164 (1973) and later included in *Marx critique du marxisme* (Paris: Petite bibliothèque Payot, 1974), was also republished as one of the *Cahiers du Vent du Ch'min*, no. 5 (1983). Trifon refers to it also on several occasions.

[43] Nicolas Trifon, *Marx à l'Est* (Saint-Denis: Vent du ch'min, 1984).

[44] Nicolas Trifon, "Marx à l'Est" (interview with Maximilien Rubel), in *Iztok*, no. 5bis (Sept. 1982), pp. 2–9.

the process of codification, led by the Party, that led to Marxism-Leninism, and shows, among other things, how Marxism-Leninism has smothered in the East what it was supposed to foster, namely the will to revolutionarily transform the world. He gives also a brief overview of the discourse of the "critical Marxists" from the Eastern bloc, sometimes influenced by Bakunin. Finally, he turns to political jokes in order to show how the people hijacked the Marxist-Leninist slang and turned it against Marxism-Leninism.

The other paper to be taken into account is G. M. Tamás's "The 'existent socialism' and the inexistent socialism".[45] This article was the translation of the last chapter of a samizdat book that Tamás had published in 1983. Trifon learned about the book and its author from István Kemény, a Hungarian sociologist and anarchist militant who had taken refuge in France. The translated article had positively impressed Trifon, who went to Budapest to meet the author. Trifon arranged for the publishing of the integral French translation of *The Eye and the Hand*,[46] a work in which Tamás set himself in the "anarchist, socialist, and trade unionist tradition".[47]

The Hungarian philosopher, born in Romania, became friends with Trifon. They were not always in agreement with each other. When Tamás came back from the UK and USA (around 1988), where he held positions as a visiting professor and visiting fellow, he lived for a little while at Trifon's, and the latter could tell that Tamás had a leaning towards anarcho-capitalism.[48] Nevertheless, they remained on cordial terms until the end; Trifon visited Tamás in Budapest and they kept exchanging ideas.

Tamás's analysis confirmed Trifon's own views. Tamás stated that "the 'existent socialism' has no relation to Marxism"[49] but noticed that "Marxism has deceived almost at the same time the privileged and the opponents".[50] The opposition, in the name of the inexistent socialism (that is, the true socialism) to the established power (a conservative Ancien Régime, according to Tamás), is no longer inspired by Marx's teaching. The good news is that "the language of political thought can no longer be the Marxist jargon of the initiated, the skilled utilisation of which allowed them to enter the public life".[51] I can testify that, towards the end of his life, Trifon held the conviction that the

[45] Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Le 'socialisme existant' et le socialisme inexistant", *Iztok*, no. 9 (1984), pp. 7–13.

[46] Gáspár Miklós Tamás, *A szem és a kéz, bevezétes a politikaba* (Budapest: AB Független Kiadó, 1983); *L'œil et la main, introduction à la politique*, transl. Julia Kóvacs (Genève: Editions Noir, 1985), in collaboration with Atelier de Création Libertaire (Lyon), *Iztok* (Paris), and Alternative Libertaire (Bruxelles).

[47] *L'œil et la main*, p. 9.

[48] Nicolas Trifon, "A la mort d'un camarade par intermittence", *Le Courrier d'Europe Centrale*, January 16, 2023, https://courrierdeuropecentrale.fr/a-la-mort-dun-camarade-par-intermittence/.

[49] *L'œil et la main*, p. 90.

[50] *L'œil et la main*, p. 91.

[51] *L'œil et la main*, p. 91.

socialist-libertarian thought of our epoch could not be Marxist, and that he cited Bookchin in support. He mocked also the post-1990s "Marxist swaggering" of his old friend, Tamás, who seemed to have forgotten what he was holding back in his anarchist period.

Trifon's thesis was that socialism is inexistent in the East, and that what is existent is state capitalism. He had argued for this thesis, for example, in a previous study, "Dissidence and Workers' Opposition to State Capitalism".[52] In the first section of the study, "Landmarks for a libertarian analysis", Trifon argues that what all of the "Eastern" regimes have in common is the pretence of the social ownership of the main means of production and exchange. The anarchist critique of this claim allows one to uncover what "socialist" regimes all over the globe, from Ethiopia to China, the Eastern countries, and Cuba have in common. All these regimes are characterised by the "statist mediation" of the social ownership of the means of production. But this mediation engenders, at the economical level, a form of state capitalism (as distinguished from, but not opposed to, the competitive monopolist capitalism), and at the political level, the identity party-state. Thus the state is no longer a political-repressive organisation at the service of the bourgeoisie, but "the very organisation, political and economic, of the bureaucracy-bourgeoisie".[53]

At Lyon, Trifon went farther and called the existent Eastern reality "totalitarianism". However, he insisted that he didn't use the term in its "mythological" Western sense. The Western concept of (inexistent) totalitarianism is, according to Trifon, at the service of the (existent) totalitarianisms. Being unable to capture the core features of Eastern totalitarianisms, the mythological concept allows the totalitarian regimes to argue that they are not totalitarian. Thus, Hannah Arendt herself explained that the Soviet Union cannot be considered totalitarian in the strict sense of the word. Against this mythology, Trifon argues that the absence of violent repression in Eastern societies after Stalin's death does not mean they are not totalitarian anymore. The totalitarianism is simply functioning differently. The previous repression-based functioning has been replaced by an ideology-based functioning. This mode of functioning is more efficient than the previous one, motivated by the will to absolute control. The spectrum of the past terror is more effective than the actual terror; post-terror dissuasion is more effective than actual repression.

One of the totalitarian practices of the Eastern regimes is disclosed by Trifon from a communicational perspective. These regimes turn what is implicit in ordinary communication into a potential object of repression. Using practices of reduction, extrapolation, and substitution, the discourse is divested of its literal meaning and invested with a subversive and illicit meaning, sometimes totally unrelated to the intentions of the speaker. The totalitarian repression is thus motivated by such implicit meanings.

[52] Nicolas Trifon, "Dissidence et opposition ouvrière au capitalisme d'Etat", *La rue*, no. 32 (1983), pp. 36–52.

[53] Nicolas Trifon, "Dissidence et opposition ouvrière au capitalisme d'Etat", p. 39.

By repressing the implicit, the regime simultaneously engenders a counterculture of the implicit, of doublespeak, of duplicity. This counterculture relativises the hold the regime has on the society. Trifon knew perfectly well the situation in Romania, where people had learned to say what the state wanted, while doing what they wished. Many had developed a way of living their lives behind the state's back, in a sort of small-scale semi-autonomy. The suspicion towards the state and the lack of scruples when it comes to taking advantage of it, whenever possible, are still common features of the Romanians' attitude towards the state.

Trifon raised also the question as to whether totalitarianism is the deed of the bureaucracy alone, or whether society also contributes to it. In the late 1970s, the lesser-known Romanian Marxist philosopher and militant Cezar Mititelu attributed the responsibility for the "unprecedented filth" (which he was not willing to call totalitarianism) in the "communist" world exclusively to the individuals composing the masses. Trifon didn't answer firmly, but was inclined to believe that the people's contribution to totalitarianism was not decisive. Even the movements of opposition, rising on ground of the forementioned counterculture can eventually turn to the regime's advantage, as the case study of Solidarność suggests.

This diagnosis conforms with the analysis of the "transition" to the liberal democracy and capitalism of the former "socialist" countries. Trifon appreciated greatly Tamás's understanding of what happened in Eastern Europe after 1989, and cited his paper "A Capitalism Pure and Simple"[54] on several occasions.[55] He shared with Tamás the belief that, in 1989, Eastern societies did not pass from socialism to capitalism, but from one form of capitalism to another. He also welcomed the Hungarian philosopher's counterarguments to the claim that state capitalism couldn't have existed in the U.S.S.R. because the private ownership of the means of production was abolished and a planned economy was introduced. But what he appreciated the most was Tamás's thesis that the so-called "socialist revolutions" did not transform class societies into classless societies, but rather caste societies into class societies. And these societies presented the typical features of classical capitalism: wage labour, the hierarchical organisation of labour, the strong opposition of manual labour and intellectual labour, the persistence of the Roman law of property, the repression of the proletarians, the persistence of the patriarchal family, of nationalism, of social and ethnical discriminations, and so on. All these features survived after the demise of state capitalism and still characterise the "post-communist" – that is, purely and simply capitalist, Eastern – societies.

[54] Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Un capitalisme pur et simple", *La Nouvelle Alternative*, no. 60–61 (2004), pp. 13–39. The English version is accessible here: www.grundrisse.net/grundrisse22/aCapitalismPurAndSimple.htm

[55] Nicolas Trifon, "Du capitalisme d'Etat au capitalisme tout court", *Au sud de l'Est* 7 (2010); "1989-2019 : retour sur l'avenement du « capitalisme pur et simple » à l'Est" (Jan. 2019), in *Oublier Cioran & Cie*, pp. 155-159.

Starting in 1985, Trifon worked in the printing industry. He joined the proofreaders union (C.G.T.), and became closer to anarcho-syndicalism than to anarcho-communism. Revolutionary syndicalism and, more generally, the workers' movements, most importantly in Eastern Europe, became the main topic of a show he hosted for several years at Radio Libertaire. He was a very active trade unionist militant, organizing protests, manifestations, support committees, and strikes, not without success. But he didn't integrate anarchist organisations anymore. He became practically an anarchist without an adjective,[56] a position that suited him fine and allowed him to be on cordial terms both with his former anarcho-communist comrades, and with the F.A. militants.

The Aromanians, or the Community against the Nation

After *Iztok* ceased to be published in 1991, Nicolas Trifon dedicated himself increasingly to the Aromanian cause. For Trifon, the cause was to have Aromanians recognised as a people in its own right, and not as a branch of the Romanian people, or as Romanised Greeks – and their mother tongue as a language in its own right, and not as a dialect of Romanian. Trifon applied his usual energy and resourcefulness in defending this cause. He joined Trâ Armânami, the association of French Aromanians, and published frequently on its official blog. He travelled extensively, met Aromanians from the Balkans, wrote, lectured, signed collective petitions, and participated in cultural and political manifestations. Along with some other activists, he founded an Aromanian library in Paris, in a desperate effort to preserve the language, and thus the cultural identity, of Aromanians living in France. He became one of the best-known and respected Aromanian intellectuals. Trifon believed that his pro-Aromanian activism was not related to his lifelong anarchist engagements. However, he thought that there might be a lesson to be learned by the anarchist from the study of the Aromanians' tribulations throughout the Century of the Nations and later.

Trifon remarked that the Aromanians did not succumb to the nationalist frenzy and didn't make any efforts to become a "nation", i.e., to create their own state, with all its institutions. Unlike the rest of the Balkan peoples, they did not have any nationalist and statist projects. "Condemned from the very beginning", Trifon writes, "the Aromanian nation did not mobilise the main interested parties".[57] On the other hand, they did not oppose the statist projects of the others, and sometimes enthusiastically participated in them. Yet they managed to maintain their identity inside the new nation-states that succeeded the Ottoman Empire. And this is explained by the Aromanians' "refusal to sacrifice the community to the nation".[58] Thus, the idea of the Aromanian nation is rejected by some Aromanians in the name of the preservation of the traditional

[56] He never defined himself to me other than as an anarchist *tout court*.

[57] Nicolas Trifon, *Aromânii pretutindeni, nicăieri*, transl. A. Ciubotaru (Chișinău: Cartier Istoric, 2012), p. 510.

[58] Trifon, *Aromânii pretutindeni, nicăieri*, p. 513.

community, while others reject it in the name of fidelity to the nation that adopted them.

All these attitudes – the ceaseless quarrels of the Aromanians, their bad faith when it comes to finding an agreement, their hostility to any authority external to the community framework – have a common denominator: the conscious refusal of the nation. Trifon appeals once again to Clastres, asking whether the traditional Aromanian community is not only deprived of a nation, but also actively against the nation. The answer is, to some extent, affirmative, but Trifon brings an important caveat. Aromanian society is against the nation contingently, because the means to create a nation were missing. With national destiny not being an option, the Aromanians chose the only remaining path: integration into other nations, doubled by the development of a pragmatic attitude, which prioritised placing personal interest above any shared ideal.

That these ideas attracted the anarchists' interest is evidenced by the fact that *Le Monde libertaire*, the press organ of F.A., published an interview with Trifon entitled "The Aromanians: Communities against the Nation".[59] While being more assertive about the Aromanian communities being communities against the nation, Trifon suggested that the study of the forms of their resistance to the temptation of nationalist projects "might prompt distancing from the national principle and the dead-ends to which it leads".[60] However, he concluded that "even if the hypotheses of the society against the state and the communities against the nation are verified, the question of how the groups and the individuals of today could do without the state and the nation remains open. With respect to this, the Guarani, as well as the Aromanians, are of little help."[61]

Ukraine, the Last Anarchist Battle

Trifon kept an attentive eye on the former Eastern bloc until the end of his life. He was deeply concerned with the war in Ukraine, of which he spoke on every occasion he had. He had a particular interest in Ukraine, where he had comrades, and he published every now and then articles on Ukraine on his official blog.[62] Starting in 2014, after the

[59] Nicolas Trifon, "Les Aroumains, des 'communautés contre la nation'", *Le monde libertaire*, no. 1407 (2005), pp. 11–13.

[60] Trifon, "Les Aroumains, des 'communautés contre la nation', p. 13.

[61] Trifon, "Les Aroumains, des 'communautés contre la nation', p. 13.

[62] E.g., "Retour sur l'Ukraine de Makhno", February 6, 2018, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Retour-sur-l-Ukraine-de-Makhno; "Voyage éclair en Ukraine occidentale" [A Quick Trip to Occidental Ukraine], 30 July 2018, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Voyage-eclair-en-Ukraine-occidentale; "La 'Grande Ukraine' vue de Chișinău", August 11, 2018, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/La-Grande-Ukraine-vue-de-Chisinau-jeu-de-cartes-avec-Vasile-Calmatui; "'Slava Ukraini!', avec Serhiy Jadan et Mikhaïl Bakounine" ["Slava Ukraini!", with S. Jadan and M. Bakunin], March 4, 2022, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Slava-Ukraini-avec-Serhiy-Jadan-et-Mikhail-Bakounine; "La Russie des tanks et l'Ukraine des livres", March 24, 2022, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Blog-o-La-Russie-des-tanks-et-l-Ukraine-des-livres; "Etre de gauche en Ukraine en temps de guerre", October 19, 2022, www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Etre-de-gauche-en-Ukraine-en-temps-de-guerre, etc.

annexation of Crimea, he was active in various informal support structures, and he gathered information directly from witnesses and through libertarian channels, like in the *Iztok* era. Nicolas Trifon's support for Ukraine, particularly Ukrainian anarchists, was practically his last militant action.

It is important to emphasise that, having contacts with the anarchist editorial collective Pagini Libere, Trifon could address directly the Romanian anarchists and left-wing anti-capitalists, which he did. In France, he distributed to Romanian-speaking acquaintances a recently published booklet, titled *Ucraina, vești de pe frontul libertar*[63] [Ukraine, news from the libertarian front]. In many ways, this booklet can be considered a posthumous issue of *Iztok*, or as the second issue of the Romanian version of *Iztok*. One of the members of the Pagini Libere collective informed me that Trifon composed the booklet practically by himself, during the "unforgettable summer" of 2022, which he spent in hospital.[64] The booklet opens with an article signed by Trifon. Trifon's article begins with the justification of the booklet's title, which at the same time establishes its link to *Iztok*:

> In the '80s, *Iztok, Libertarian Journal for the Eastern Countries* had a column entitled "News from the Front", which informed the French-speaking public of the contesting initiatives, particularly libertarian, taken despite the interdictions and repressions, in the countries from the region of the "really inexistent" socialism, as we called it back then, by imitating the credo formulated by Brezhnev after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Honestly, after the changes that intervened at the end of the '80s, it would never have occurred to me that such a column could become actual once more, more than four decades later. Except that now, the front I am so impatient to receive news from, and to spread them in my turn, is of a wholly different nature: it has been four months since, in Ukraine, the Russian Federation began killing, robbing, persecuting, blackmailing and calumniating those opposing its imperial plans (velleities).[65]

Trifon aims to address several topics: the role the anarchist played in the Maidan Revolution, the anarchists' position with respect to the power installed after Maidan and to the evolution of the situation in the Russian Federation in subsequent years, the problems the anarchists have been confronted with since the invasion of Ukraine, and the press echoes of the anarchist's involvement in the present conflict. In addition to Trifon's paper, several articles by members of the Ukrainian Anarcho-Syndicalists' Revolutionary Confederation (K.R.A.S.) deal with the recent history of the anarchist

[63] Nicolas Trifon, *Ucraina, vești de pe frontul libertar* (Cluj-Napoca: Pagini Libere, 2022).

[64] Adrian Tătăran, private conversation, November 2023.

[65] Trifon, *Ucraina, vești de pe frontul libertar*, p. 1.

movement in Ukraine. There is also an interview with some anarchists from the Donbas area about the present situation and the involvement of anarchists in it. Also, an article by C. Ganait recalls that the history of Ukrainian anarchism passes also through Romania, now host of tens of thousands of Ukrainians driven away from their fatherland by the Russians.

The booklet is designed to precisely delineate the position of anarchists from Ukraine in regard to Russia's annexionism, to the Ukrainian state's nationalist and capitalist agenda, and to some Ukrainian left-wing organisations (parties and/or trade unions), which in fact are not libertarian and revolutionary, but rather conservative and authoritarian. This is notably the case with Borotba (issued from the discredited Communist Party of Ukraine), of which the Ukrainian anarchists overtly demarcated, in a Declaration from 2014, translated into Romanian and included in the booklet's annexes. Just as in the days of *Iztok*, Trifon worked to give the Ukrainian libertarians the means to make themselves heard, without distortion, in another cultural space. His own position with respect to the war and the Ukrainian state was beset with the same moral difficulties that the Ukrainian libertarians themselves have to face: in resisting the imperialist velleities of the Russian Federation, either by supporting the wider popular struggle against the invader or by joining the defence forces of the state, the anarchist finds himself on the same side of the barricade as the pro-capitalists, nationalists, and authoritarians of all sorts. The choice, however, is obvious for any lucid and informed Eastern European, despite its arduousness. In the present context, a coherent anti-authoritarian stance includes resistance against imperialism and any war of aggression, such as the one waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

Conclusion

If we were to summarise Trifon's main theoretical contributions, we could single out the following three. First, Trifon's conception from the 1970s of what it means to be an anarchist retains its relevance. To be an anarchist is not necessarily to have a doctrine, to belong to an organisation, or to subscribe to some "ideal"; to be an anarchist is to engage in anti-statist *and* anti-capitalist practices, to discover such practices, and to experiment on a small scale with various forms of organisation and of social collaboration which could be generalised and become the (at least local) pillars of a global state-free, socialist society.

Next, we could retain the support he provided for the thesis that the Eastern regimes were not instances of "state socialism", but were instances of totalitarian state capitalism. The sad historical experience of the Eastern peoples did not therefore discredit socialism, in any intellectually responsible use of the term. In emphasizing the importance of workers' self-governance for the genuine socialization of the means of production and exchange, and on the lack thereof in Eastern societies, Trifon effectively argued that socialism was inexistent in the Eastern bloc. He joined voices with those who had preceded him in arguing for the incompatibility between socialism and the state.

Finally, Trifon's hypothesis of the existence, in the Balkans, of such communities, akin to those "societies against the state" of the South American tropical rainforest, is worthy of interest. For us, Eastern Europeans, living in a part of the world where states and nationalism are inextricably intertwined, rendering the task of abolishing the state even more difficult, and where capitalism is welcomed and hailed almost as a religion, the empirical verification of Trifon's hypothesis has the value of a research program. The aim is to find a strategy for resisting the siren song of the "national ideal", responsible for so many tragedies in the Balkans and elsewhere. The Eastern "nation" is an additional obstacle to the overcoming of the statist, authoritarian order. But Trifon felt that one should not have to give up his ethnic identity in order to be a libertarian. The Aromanian example could help us envisage a place for the ethnic community in an anarchist federative society.

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INQUIRY

ANARCHISTS AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Ondřej Slačálek, Grzegorz Piotrowski, and Miroslav Tomek, eds.

The war in Ukraine has divided anarchists. Some struggle against the Russian invasion by supporting Ukrainian society (and, at least to some extent, the Ukrainian state); others profess a principled opposition to both sides in the conflict. Some mobilize historical parallels; others explain differences in political positions by referencing differing regional experiences. In order to capture and understand the variety of anarchist positions, and to reflect on points of agreement and disagreement among them, during summer and early autumn 2023, we posed the following questions to a selection of activists, theorists, scholars of anarchism, and researchers of anarchist movements:
What have we learned from the reactions of Ukrainian, Russian, Belarussian, and international anarchist movements?
Do we know anything now that we did not know before?
Do the differences among anarchists have deep-seated causes?
Will these differences endure and have long-term effects?
Has the war changed elements of the anarchist point of view?

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> *Anarchists do not stand aside from popular struggle, nor do they attempt to dominate it. They seek to contribute practically whatever they can, and to assist within it the highest possible levels of both individual and group solidarity.*
> Stuart Christie

Divisions within the anarchist movement are nothing new and in fact, "[insert topic of the day] has divided anarchists" would serve as a good sentence to begin a text about pretty much any moment of contemporary anarchist history. I don't consider this attitude a problem of anarchism: after all, it is a movement without leaders, a movement of many diverse flavors, one where any position of authority can be questioned. A movement lacking dogmatism, on paper at least.

Thus it was predictable that there would be many approaches to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. This would not be a problem by itself, and the discussion could have been carried on with respect to various diverse interpretations of what is anarchism, as well as the diversity of the lived experiences of anarchists from different parts of the world, the general history of anarchists in armed conflict, as well as the respect for the actual reality we all live in and the ambition to come up with politics matching it. This, however, is not how it went, and instead we saw a rather ugly show of Western supremacy coming from some parts of Western anarchism, combined with a narrow, religious even, interpretation of what anarchism is, delivered with no regard for the diversity of the anarchist movement and the complexity of the world. To achieve this goal, the anarchist Western supremacists came up with a whole set of tactics. One of them was wilfully ignoring what the vast majority of their East and Central European comrades were trying to explain to them. Another one was gatekeeping the very term of *anarchism* and assuming the position of the decisive, unquestionable authority on all things relating to it and as such only enforcing the impression of them coming from a supremacy position. Another one was displaying extreme levels of hostility towards Eastern European anarchists attempting to engage in this discourse, and often dismissing them in a borderline conspiracy theorist way, by, for example, implying that they are CIA agents, undercover fascists, and so on. It is, however, unfair to say that all, or indeed a majority, of Western anarchist groups reacted in the above way. While this attitude was displayed by a small yet vocal minority of the movement was very disturbing to witness and experience, many others

instead offered unquestionable solidarity and material assistance to their Ukrainian, Russian, and wider Eastern European comrades. This ongoing assistance is one of the more impressive projects I've seen anarchists undertaking in recent years, and it is made even more commendable by the fact that I am aware that in many cases, it comes despite the discomfort of sacrificing some aspects of one's beliefs and politics in the face of a humanitarian crisis and war crimes committed by the Russian army, together with the drive to show solidarity to their Eastern European comrades. This attitude of anarchist groups makes them distinguishably different from most other parts of the Western radical left, and it is the aspect of anarchism I consider the most hopeful for the future, with all its complex problems that call for non-dogmatic, out-of-the-box solutions. I think it is difficult to say what will change from the anarchist point of view in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, for the simple fact that there are many anarchist points of view. But what will make a lasting impact is a core of true anarchist politics: judging things for what they are, listening to the people directly affected, doing what we can to help others with their struggle with an oppressive power, and contributing practically by whatever we can. If we can get it right, we will have a chance at becoming a significant power. If we can't, we will become – or in some cases remain – a social club for people who like reading old books.

Boyevaya organizatsiya anarkho-kommunistov (BOAK; Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists)

as part of the Belarusian and Russian partisan movement, has existed since 2020; since February 2022, BOAK has claimed responsibility for actions designed to disrupt the logistics of the Russian Army in the Russian Federation and in Belarus.

From the position where we are standing, war doesn't really change anarchists' point of view. But rather it makes the differences between groups clearer. We heard the same arguments and discussions in 2014, when some 'anarchists' were stating that people in Maidan in Kyiv were not anarchists, and that's why we shouldn't take part in this struggle. And the same voices during the 2020–2021 Belarusian protests said: "This isn't an anarcho protest; it's just a protest. We shouldn't take sides with these people. The time for our revolution hasn't come yet." And here is what we have to say to this: this is just bullshit from people who aren't ready to fight and would never be ready to fight the state.

In times of struggle – and especially wars – you can't stay away from battle. The best you can do is try and create your own force, fighting for the anarcho ideals. But if

you can't create such force and you choose to stay away from the battle, to be "against both sides of conflict" by doing nothing, you actually begin acting in favor of one of the sides. Not acting against the bigger evil, not trying to stop it – that means helping it. And just to have possibility to fight lesser evil - you need to to stop bigger evil first. Even if to stop the bigger evil you need to in some way cooperate with the lesser evil.

And we believe that through this conflict, the anarcho-movement will become clearer, without "talking heads" and "passengers" doing nothing but talk about how "both sides are bad and therefore we should do nothing". Because people – inside and outside the movement – will see, in such extreme times, what's true anarchism and what's just comfortable lifestyles in times of peace.

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Russian anarchists are divided into those who oppose the war and those who directly support Ukraine. The Belarusian movement of anarchists and anti-fascists all support Ukraine, and a significant number of them are fighting in the Ukrainian defense forces. Polish and Czech anarchists from the federation also support us, but we did not feel any support from anarcho-syndicalists, namely support for Ukrainians who are fighting the occupiers. Instead, we hear from them about their dislike of NATO, and about how Ukraine is a NATO puppet. I was upset by the French, Spanish, Italian, and Greek anarchist movements. As it turned out, many of them got their information from *Russia Today*.

We didn't learn anything new from this war, but we saw that anarchists today are not as ready to clearly take sides as they were during the First and Second World Wars, and the civil war in Spain between them. Bakunin and Kropotkin easily took sides, Polish anarcho-syndicalists took part in the Warsaw Uprising, the interbrigades fought in Spain... But now anarchists were not unanimous in their support even for Rojava in Syria (Syrian Kurdistan).

The war did not in the least change the point of view of Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian anarchists. We have all known that Russia is an imperialist and fascist empire, that Lukashenko's pro-Kremlin dictatorship in Belarus is fascist, and that Ukraine is an island of freedom among the countries of the former USSR. In the 30 years since the

collapse of the USSR, Russian imperialists have pursued aggressive policies in Ichkeria, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Syria, African countries, etc. If the global anarchist movement does not understand that bad democracies are better than fascist dictatorships, there will be a line of division between those who defend freedom and those who are intoxicated by dogmas, because their ideological uncertainty is infantilism, as are their calls for Ukrainians to lay down arms to end the war. I never thought I would see the day when the international left would sing in unison with the far right in favor of Putin's dictatorship and the Kremlin's savage imperialism.

Translated by Max Ščur

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Ribs of War: Lessons for Anarchists

Since 2014, Russian aggression in Ukraine has revealed many hidden trends in recent history, both in the post-Soviet space and far beyond. Their analysis seems productive both for modernity as a whole and for comprehending the state of contemporary anarchism – including on a planetary scale.

The first and most obvious among these tendencies is the latent but inexorable inertia of empire and the imperial worldview, which permeates even anarchist discourses: Like many key figures of early twentieth-century Moscow anarchism, who retained an imperial colonial understanding of planetary space – including an understanding of Ukraine as the South of Russia, and did not take its liberation struggle seriously – many of the contemporary metropolitan anarchists have clearly inherited a Russian-imperial optic (ultimately often paradoxically coinciding with the Kremlin's). This happens to them even despite their articulated political rejection of the USSR: perhaps unbeknownst to themselves, they fully reproduce its epistemology, which promises them the position of a Cartesian subject "2.0" – perfectly neutral, perfectly normal, perfectly objective and devoid of specific properties, and therefore claiming to speak on behalf of some universal international anarchist subject who can see all facets of truth and freedom.

Calling any deviations from their own image "harmful and annoying concreteness that sows discord in the ranks of workers" (referring to both regional, gender, and many other experiences), they actually insist on the priority of some abstract anarchism in an

ideal theoretical vacuum over reality, and they see themselves as priests of these sacred spaces, untainted by brute reality and tedious empirical details (well, isn't this what the empire tempts all its inhabitants to do?). To date, this originally philosophical problem has taken on a radically political character, as both the practices of inclusion-exclusion and the unity-disunity of the entire anarchist movement, as well as what its energies are directed towards – including in matters of solidarity and struggle – are turned away from it. All this points to how vulnerable to the inertia of systems of power the discourse on anarchist resistance proves to be, insensitive to philosophical registers.

This is not surprising, however: post-Soviet anarchism, represented predominantly by historians (articulately skeptical of philosophy and therefore not prone to philosophical-political reflection and self-criticism), has not really bothered to adopt at least a foreign philosophical perspective on reflection on power, and has therefore largely confined itself to unviable cosplay of anarchists of the past or vaguely abstract anarchists of the ideal world (as they appear to the inhabitants of the Metropolis). However, the narrow historical discourses of the empire quite predictably turn out to be untrue to history itself: the classic anarchist, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, directly supported the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians (Cossacks) against Polish colonization; M. Bakunin defended the independence of Galician Ukrainians from Russia and Poland both in his Panslavist period and already being an anarchist and insisting on the idea of national self-determination of "small nationality"; and Kropotkin advocated the right of anarchists to participate in the national liberation movement ("but do not deny nationalist movements"), and to support nationalities that rise up against national oppression, because only by getting rid of external national oppression can a nation finally fully take the path of social revolution and fight for its further liberation from oppression by the national bourgeoisie, with which the proletariat of a certain nation will no longer have to ally for the sake of fighting against the "common enemy". Such views were held by many theorists and practitioners of anarchism: Emma Goldman, Grigorii Maximov, Alexei Borovoi, and others.[1] Thus, even purely historically, the greatest theorists and practitioners of anarchism did not stand on the positions from which the view of the war professed by the modern anarchists of the metropolis would be possible today – either equating Russia and Ukraine as bourgeois states, or even being more loyal to the empire as "the lesser evil" – on the principle that "if a state is evil, then one state is quantitatively better than many". It is characteristic that in the current war, these zealots of "true anarchism" are not at all in favor of Esperanto being established on both sides (however, even this would be less fantastic than the demands they actually voice): given

[1] Today this is rightly pointed out by anarchists in Ukraine, e.g., see Denis Khromoy's new text: "Mif Vadima Dam'e o 'klassičeskom anarhistskom internacionalizme'" [Vadim Damier's Myth of 'Classical Anarchist Internationalism'], *Pramen'*, August 21, 2023, https://pramen.io/ru/2023/08/otvet-na-tezisy-vadima-dame-o-vojne-mezhdu-ukrainoj-i-rf/.

this, we can say that when the Russian world devours everything different from itself, whoever remains silent is no longer neutral but is clearly on the side of the aggressor.

The second obvious trend revealed by the Russian military invasion is that not only citizens and beneficiaries of the Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet empires are vulnerable to the inertia discussed above, but also all those who uncritically inherit the automatism of global political representations (mostly Western), trying to evaluate them from the spaces of cozy everyday life, for which any global catastrophes look so distant (moreover, equidistant) that they are always almost purely theoretical. This is what the Stalinist camps looked like to the French intellectuals of the 1950s. This is what war in modern Ukraine for many activists of the First World looks like.

In fact, in this case, we are also talking about the epistemological inertia of power, but at the other pole. After years of ignoring the SOS signals from the post-Soviet abyss and, in general, the problems of the Second World, which is lost in the indistinguishability of its own allegedly unimportant existence, the First World woke up abruptly with the beginning of a full-scale invasion and – according to its grandfatherly (modern) habit of making an "objective" judgment based on metaphysical constructions that had been ingrained in its contented and sleepy space for centuries – found nothing better than to reapply Cold War optics to the new catastrophe. And it is not a big deal that in these optics there was no place for Ukrainian society as a political subject capable not only of political will, but also, as we have seen, of defending its foundations and imperatives.

By presenting the Russian war in Ukraine as an old confrontation of the bipolar world, many anarchists and leftists of the First World – out of the usual lordly clumsiness – found it possible to neglect such a "trifle" as the specifics of the current confrontation (in Latin America, where such sentiments are, alas, just as strong, they are at least explainable: on the one hand, there is its own struggle, on the other – the real remoteness from what is happening in Ukraine and Russia).

Meanwhile, it is obvious that a global authoritarian state – with a nightmarish biography, with a growing dictatorship built on repression, torture, arbitrary rule by oligarchs, strongmen, and corruption – has attacked and is committing genocide in a neighboring autonomous state. It is possible to imagine this confrontation as a conflict between two equal sides only from afar, but in fact it is even crazier than to imagine it as a conflict between the workers and the bourgeoisie: at least the workers outnumber the bourgeoisie. To urge today's Ukraine – in the spirit of patriarchal "wisdom" to "set a good example" and "renounce militarism" by laying down arms – is the same as urging the victim not to resist the torturer and to give him everything he needs. The fact that both Russia and Ukraine are formally in the same position as states does not make their specific situations equal: especially in light of everything that has already happened in the past year and a half.

All the more so because the confrontation with NATO clearly serves the Putin regime only as a legitimate and purely decorative screen for its arbitrary behavior in Ukraine:

otherwise, it would hardly allow such an unprecedented approach of NATO to Russia's borders as it did as a result of Russian military aggression Thus, the epistemological inertia of power systems lies not only in the foundations of Putin's empire. It is also contained within the worldview of the privileged First World – and originates in the inertia of the former Western narcissism, which is insensitive to the reality of the Second World but is not ready to give up its claim to a final and true judgment about it (no matter how far it is from reality). This is true both for the right (which gives Russia the ability to resist the "corrupt callousness" of the Decline of Europe) and for the left (from which voices are heard in support of the supposed "People's Republic" of Donbass and the malignant "People's Republic of the DPR and the so-called malignancy of neoliberalism").[2]

The third problem posed in a new way by the Russian war in Ukraine is the deep problematic nature and weak elaboration of the philosophical opposition between universalism and localism/regionalism. At the same time, the very existence of this opposition in contemporary anarchism (including the fact that it is not realized articulately) is problematic. Thus, if, in the spirit of metropolitan anarchists, we think of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine as a confrontation between (altermodern Soviet) universalism and (national liberation) regionalism, we cannot avoid many uncomfortable questions. For example: is life without Putin, the Kremlin, and Soviet inertia (against which Ukrainian society is heroically fighting today) exactly "regionalism"? Such a false dilemma can be used only by the Kremlin, which speculates on the notion of "neo-Nazism", naming everything that does not want to be absorbed and dissolved to the point of indistinguishability. Meanwhile, even problematic from the point of view of anarchism and its criticism of capital, Ukraine's European integration would actually mean nothing more than its joining a broad federation of other European nations (as opposed to Russia, a somewhat more plausible federation), with the prospect of resolving language, social policy, and other problems through a European legal procedure – undoubtedly more humane than those envisioned in Russia.

In this sense, it would be correct to say that it is Ukraine that finds itself in the field of universalism – inheriting the conquests of European modernity (including its epistemological universalism), while Russia, on the contrary, finds itself in the position of aggressive imperial regionalism – both inside and outside imposing the Russian world, the Russian language, and an ugly golem of Russian values, crookedly glued together by bureaucrats on their knees and from someone else's memory. Thus, it is obvious that the existing opposition of regionalism and universalism is not so simple, and it requires closer scrutiny, taking into account the current level of development of

[2] There is no doubt that this exists – the West has indeed traded with Putin to the last, closing its eyes and plugging its ears – but it manifests itself much more in the inertia of thinking than in political intentionality.

humanitarian knowledge. In all likelihood, we should talk about the need to develop fundamentally alternative ways of thinking about planetary space and of interacting with it (this is how anarchist geography sets one of its tasks today). This imperative seems all the more important in light of the cynical hijacking of decolonial rhetoric by federal Russian discourses – which claim that Russia is fighting the colonizing states (the United States) and liberating (not exploiting, as we might think) African, Asian, Latin American societies, as well as its own indigenous societies. By labeling reactionary, exploitative, and destructive practices as "decolonial", the Russian regime, through its rhetoric and its arbitrariness, unwittingly sheds light on the problem of conflating the decolonial and the conservative as such. Subsequently, this problem may also confront post-war (victorious) Ukraine. It is worth remembering that decoloniality is only an optic equipped with a system of methods and approaches.

Without an anti-state, anti-hierarchical, and emancipatory core, it risks slipping into a monstrous conservative order like the Taliban. The primary task of contemporary anarchists is to provide decolonial discourses with a coherent and properly developed anarchist perspective. In developing this perspective, a careful reflection on philosophical dichotomies – in particular regionalism/universalism, etc. – is necessary. These are some of the most obvious problems manifested by the Russian war in Ukraine, which require a close reflection of both contemporary anarchism and contemporary society in general.

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The Russian war against Ukraine is the key part of Putin's (and Lukashenko's) project of restoration of the Russian-Soviet (allow me to say Knuto-Soviet) empire. Everyone familiar with the history of this Empire (Tzarism, Stalinism, Brezhnevism, and now Putinism) and of its colonized nations, or who, like me, was even born in the Empire, has every reason to freak out and to do everything imaginable to prevent its restoration (or, even better, to be instrumental in its disintegration). More so, this time the Empire is totally stripped of any shadow of a progressivist social ideology, which has been replaced by a Russian nationalist-chauvinist-revanchist-traditionalist-sexist (that is, classic right-wing) trash of a discourse. This, combined with Russia's natural and human resources and nuclear weapons, makes this ideology by far the most dangerous form of present-day fascism, which every sound leftist is morally obliged to fight – albeit

sometimes in an unpleasant alliance with one's political adversaries, which was also the case in WWII.

The fact that the Empire dresses itself up (for the Western intellectuals) as a colony fighting Western colonialism is a genuinely funny moment in the history of propaganda. However, a similar rhetoric was previously used by the Nazi (and the Japanese) imperialists. Just as the Nazis blamed the collapse of the Knuto-German empire on Jews, not on their own Prussian WWI militarism, the Russian fascists blame the collapse of their Knuto-Soviet empire on the "collective West", not on their own bankrupt state capitalism (or state fossil capitalism, to be precise). In both cases, we are dealing with a form of historical identity crisis, delusion of grandeur, and denial of a painful reality. In both cases, we have a big nation pretending to be not just a part of the Western world (which both Germany and Russia undoubtedly are), but a full-scale "civilization" with their own "peculiar, authentic, non-decadent" values. Well, it was a propaganda myth serving the elites in the German case, and it is a propaganda myth serving the elites in the Russian one.

As for the two main anarchist approaches to the war, the anti-Western and the pro-Ukrainian, I think that the core problem here is actually the very definition of imperialism. To my knowledge, the anti-Western approach is historically based on the Marxist-Leninist concept of imperialism as "the last stage of (liberal) capitalism" which is somehow "inherent" only to the West; and the pro-Ukrainian one draws from the Bakunist critique of imperialism(s), for example, in *Statism and Anarchy* (1873). Unless there will finally be a serious anarchist deconstruction of Marxist theory, there will always be a Marxist tendency in anarchism, especially in the West, where Marxism never was a state ideology, unlike in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries. Besides, as the heir of the Knuto-Soviet empire, the Russian fascist state traditionally supports and will always support (directly or indirectly) Western Marxist proponents of Lenin's definition of *imperialism*, using them as "useful idiots" (another Lenin phrase) in its hybrid war for world domination, regardless of whether or not they call themselves anarchists.

Ratibor Trivunac

is a Serbian political activist, anarchist, publisher, and one of the founders of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI) – the Serbian section of the International Workers' Association (AIT); he is also active in the Center for Libertarian Studies – Belgrade.

The response of the international anarchist movement to the inter-imperialist war in Ukraine has shown that the majority of the (working-class based) and (organized) anarchist movement is still capable of maintaining principled anti-militarist positions,

even in a situation of strong nationalist, capitalist, and imperialist pressure for us to abandon our ideals and turn to warmongering, or even to get us directly involved in ruling-class conflict on an international scale. Only a few relevant organizations, for the time being, have abandoned these principles and have fallen for the nationalist and chauvinist politics of the capitalists. On the other hand, it confirmed yet again that the segments of the international anarchist movement which are not founded in working-class politics and/or are based on unorganized and informalist traditions are much more prone – as Malatesta noted during WWI – to forgetting our principles, when this is a more convenient and comfortable position to take. Just like the social democrats and some of the noted anarchists during WWI – to which the current conflict between NATO and Russia in Ukraine has many similarities due to the inter-imperialist nature of the ongoing war – many of those claiming to be anarchists from these traditions have found themselves on the social-chauvinist, nationalist, and pro-imperialist positions.

Even if it is clear that pure experience, without an ideological and argumentative framework to interpret it, is not enough for comprehending the situation in its totality, and therefore insufficient for understanding the whole truth about the issue that is being investigated, the experience of some of the Ukrainian soldiers who like to identify themselves with anarchism is sometimes used to justify political alignment with one of the imperialist sides in this war. The same so-called experience, which on the ideological level amounts to nothing more than repetition of nationalist and chauvinist phrases, is used to silence the voices of those elements of the anarchist movement which reject this kind of downfall of our movement into nationalist reaction. Very often, these kinds of emotional pleas, garnished with the claims of the exclusiveness of Eastern European insight, albeit totally empty on the theoretical level and without any foundation in our principles and ideology, have a political effect due to the lack of comprehension of the phrases used and a deeper understanding of the events that are being presented. This is painful to watch, especially to some of us anarchists from the ex-Yugoslavian region of Eastern Europe who are unlucky enough to have personally lived through and remember the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. We ourselves have directly witnessed civil war, nationalist bloodshed, imperialist aggression, sanctions, anti-war movements, colored revolution, brutal transition to neoliberal capitalism, mass impoverishment of the working class, retraditionalization, and the general lowering of the civilization level in our societies. Especially we anarchists from the Republic of Serbia, apart from the above-mentioned things, had the experience of a proxy war during the Yugoslav civil war. Slobodan Milošević, the former leader of Serbia (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), which was not an official participant in the war in Bosnia and Croatia, had been arming, training, organizing, and directing Serbian forces in those places in the 1990s, as the USA and EU are doing today with Ukraine. We have experience living with the so-called territorial defense units, and we are aware that those units, despite their ambiguous name, are in fact controlled by state armies, but also that a majority

of the war crimes in Yugoslav wars were committed exactly by those types of units. This kind of experience of ours, which is hindering attempts of political fishing in the troubled waters, and which is coupled with our strong adhesion to basic principles of our ideology, is leaving those who have fallen for nationalist and imperialist tricks in the situation to misinterpret our positions, accuse us of supporting other imperialist power, or even question anti-militarism from the positions that we have seen all states employ during wartime.

It is undeniable that these circumstances and the division that arises from them are distinctly marking structural elements that not only determine the relationship of anarchist movement with imperialist conflicts, but also many other crucial issues of the present era, thus defining the fundamental components of anarchist strategy and tactics for the future. The uniqueness of global events, as with the previous world wars and with the current conflict in Ukraine (and possibly other inter-imperialist conflicts between AUKUS and China in Taiwan), is that they enable the entire global population, and specifically international political movements, to define positions towards the events that affect us all. Those are the situations in which the crystallization of ideological positions occurs and in which chasms that until that point might have existed under the same banner become unbridgeable. Therefore, there is no doubt that this divide, especially if the imperialist conflict intensifies itself and war more clearly takes the character of the world war, by moving from proxy-inter-imperialist to openly inter-imperialist conflict, will have long-term consequences for the global anarchist movement. The demarcation lines will be strongly drawn between those of us who are maintaining class-orientated, internationalist, and anti-militarist positions, and those who are a colorful addendum to the rainbow imperialism, those who have capitulated to nationalism and chauvinism and placed themselves at the disposal of imperialist bandits.

What we could have learned from these recent events and debates within the movement and its gathering places is how irrationalism, positivism, and emotional blackmailing are often and easily – and sometimes successfully – used in attempts to justify the betrayal of our movement's ideals by those who have placed themselves in the service of capitalist armies. This will warrant not only a fierce struggle for the preservation of our movement in the days to come and a detailed scrutiny of segments of our movement's praxis, but also, parallel to that, a deep reassessment of elements of our theoretical and methodological apparatuses. I feel that in the theoretical realm a strong and conscious rejection of Kropotkin's positivism, which has led us time and time again into a political dead end, is desperately needed, with a necessity for a vehement return to Bakunin's revolutionary dialectical and materialist approach to understanding of the world.

Belarusian Anarchists in Warsaw

is a group of Belarusian anarchists who had to leave Belarus because of the persecutions. They prefer to remain anonymous. One participator in the group is the author of the Russian-language podcast Dogma: Uneasy Talks About War.

In our opinion, the war has highlighted how much anarchists are products of their own local capitalist and geopolitical environment. Specifically, we have seen that colonialism manifested itself in divisions along its usual lines. It is the West (First World) against the East (Second World). People – and anarchists – in the West think that they know better; they predominantly don't ask their comrades who are clashing in the frontlines about what they think and what motivates them, because they have readymade answers. This is the product of a long-term tradition in which the East was oriented to the West in the anarchist movement – we cannot teach Western anarchists anything, we can only copypaste what already exists there and try to apply it in our contexts. This status quo was for a long time convenient for the Western comrades. Now that we suddenly have our own opinion and choose controversial tactics, they are confused.

It is also interesting, that just like the Ukrainian state is completely dependent on the Western "democracies" for resources and arms, so are the Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian anarchists who have to go around wealthier Western anarchist places to ask for money to continue their work.

We have also seen that international solidarity is an empty declaration. All anarchists expressed their position against the war and for the people, the working class, and the oppressed, but what did that mean in material terms? We are wondering how many of the oppressed in Ukraine felt any of that solidarity. How many collectives in the West, understanding that they didn't want to support the armed participation in the war, tried to negotiate with the Ukrainian comrades about how else that cooperation could look, if not buying helmets?

The same can be said about the reaction of the Russian movement, which basically remained silent about the war, which started in 2014, and was cautious about trying to build connections with their Ukrainian comrades. It's now the second year of the full-scale invasion, and we still do not see any attempts to create a common antiwar front in the post-Soviet region.

Another thing that is not so clear, and might seem a bit conspiratorial to some, is the power that the "reds" (authoritarian communists) have on the anarchist discourse. The war has shown that it is huge. We can see how in countries like Germany, where there is no clear division between anarchists and communists, the "general left" repeats the old Soviet and now Russian myths of "the West against Russia" and "capitalists against socialists". The absolute lack of socialism in the Bolshevik USSR was discussed by anarchists, such as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, as early as 1925 or so. But the Soviets, and then the authoritarian left parties sponsored by them, who survived in

some form until now were much more successful in selling their own version of reality and propagating "oppression by the West". In most Southern European countries, this discourse is clearly connected to the "reds" propaganda, but is hailed by the anarchist movement, just because it's convenient.

This war will leave a big schism in the movement for a longer time. The anarchist East stopped blindly taking for granted what is said or done by some of the Western comrades. And it will take a long time to build back the trust and the real international solidarity in our movement.

Anatoly Dubovik

A Ukrainian anarchist from Dnipro; a member of the Association of Anarchist Movements (1990–1994) and the Nestor Makhno Revolutionary Confederation of Anarchists-Syndicalists (1994–2014); since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine (2014), he has been actively engaged in the defense of Ukraine.

For almost 10 years now, the biggest and bloodiest war in Europe in more than 70 years has been going on. For me personally, the reaction to what is happening on the part of anarchists outside of Ukraine has only confirmed the sad conclusions that my comrades and I came to long ago: not only is the anarchist movement in crisis, not only does it lack serious power and influence in society, but it cannot and does not even want to get out of this state. The only serious attempt I know of to analyze the current events and formulate conclusions – seemingly obvious conclusions! – was made by the Czech Federation of Anarchists. The other anarchist organizations were incapable of doing even that. (We are talking specifically about organizations, not individuals or informal groups of friends within organizations.) For many anarchists, as it was 10–20 years ago, anarchism and anarchist action remain a struggle for the rights of this or that "minority", a philanthropic movement to help the homeless, a faction within the ecological or vegetarian movement, and so on – anything but a revolutionary movement to change society on the principles of freedom and solidarity.

I apologize for the banality: we are not democrats, and our goal is not the improvement of the state by democratic (or any other) methods, but the elimination of any state. At the same time, it is obvious that the degree of freedom – or, if you like, the starting conditions for the implementation of our program – varies from state to state. We, who started anarchist activity in the USSR (or in the Eastern European countries subordinate to the USSR), know it well from personal experience. There are states in which we anarchists have the opportunity to legally disseminate our ideas (the other question is how we use this opportunity). There are states in which anarchist beliefs themselves are punishable by prison. And there have been states in which the punishment was death.

When an authoritarian fascist state attacks a democratic state, it is necessary to defend the latter. At least for the sake of self-preservation.

When authoritarian, practically fascist modern Russia attacks relatively democratic Ukraine with the aim of destroying it and its people – and is *already* destroying it (by mass executions in the occupied territories, total bombing of frontline cities, constant rocket attacks on civilian objects in the rear) – one has to defend the relative freedom that exists here and which Russia hopes to break and replace with the fascist "Russian world".

Ukrainian anarchists had to become temporary, situational allies of the Ukrainian state – against the common enemy.

A paradox? Yes. The same as Makhno's alliance with the Bolsheviks against White reaction. Or the alliance of the FAI-CNT[3] with the Spanish state against Franco. Or the alliance of Spanish, French, Polish, and other anarchists with different governments against Hitler.

Surprisingly, we need to explain this to many anarchists outside of Ukraine.

Surprisingly, it seems that nowhere in the world have anarchists tried to think: what should their groups and organizations do if something like the war in Ukraine starts in their country?

Something new? I now know in practice what I used to know only in theory – and what I have said above. There are situations when anarchists have to ally even with the state against a worse common enemy. This is not something that you can be happy about; it is unpleasant, but it may be unavoidable. The main thing is not to forget who we are and what we want.

For me and my comrades, the war changed nothing about our anarchist convictions. All the elements of our worldview have remained in the same place.

It is difficult for me to comment on the question of disagreements among anarchists about the ongoing war. There are no disagreements among Ukrainian anarchists. Disagreements are somewhere out there, far away. They cause us annoyance and even irritation ("Why don't these people understand such simple and obvious things?!"), but also an unexpected relief: we have no such disagreements, we are united in recognizing the need for self-defense, in recognizing the need to defend our people.

Disagreements between anarchists will, of course, remain. As a historian of the anarchist movement, I know that there have always been disagreements between anarchists. As a practical participant in the anarchist movement, I hope that these disagreements will lead to a division.

In the short term, it will be a division between those who recognize the need to protect people from imperialist fascist aggression and a touching conglomerate of pacifists, abstract anti-militarists, and just big fans of anything with the label "Made in Russia".

In the long term, it will be the restoration of an ideological, organized, socially ac-

[3] CNT-FAI, Federación Anarquista Ibérica – Confederación Nacional del Trabajo.

tive class anarchism – which will get rid of the ballast of "lifestyle anarchists" and of, let me call them "anarchists of one idea" (those fighting for animal rights, feminism, legalization of marijuana or same-sex marriage, "anarcho-punks", and so on).

Translated by Max Ščur

Volodymyr Ishchenko

is a research associate at the Institute for East European Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. His research focuses on protests and social movements, revolutions, radicalization, right and left politics, nationalism, and civil society. He has published widely on contemporary Ukrainian politics, the Euromaidan revolution, and the ensuing war, and he has been a prominent contributor to the Guardian, Al Jazeera, New Left Review, *and* Jacobin. *He is the author of* Towards the Abyss: Ukraine from Maidan to War *(Verso Books, forthcoming, 2024).*

The Russia-Ukraine war has undoubtedly fractured the anarchist movement, reflecting broader transformations within contemporary anarchism and leftist politics. Over the last half-century, anarchists, and the radical left in general, have witnessed the erosion of their once-distinct class base. This shift has not only profoundly affected their theoretical frameworks – the shift from broadly Marxian class theories to a broadly Foucauldian poststructuralism – but has also hindered their capacity to effectively analyze and respond to current international events. Instead of engaging in strategic hegemonic politics, they often find themselves navigating the fluid terrain of hyperpolitics, characterized by extreme politicization but with limited political consequences, as recently articulated by Anton Jäger.[4]

One consequence of this evolving landscape is the challenge that anarchists and the broader left face in comprehending the material underpinnings of the Russia-Ukraine war. Fundamentally, the war arises from a class conflict between post-Soviet political capitalists on one side and the professional middle-class aligned with transnational capital on the other.[5] The working class, in this conflict, is divided and lacks an inde-

[4] Anton Jäger, *Hyperpolitik: Extreme Politisierung ohne politische Folgen* (Franfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2023).

[5] Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Behind Russia's War Is Thirty Years of Post-Soviet Class Conflict", *Jacobin*, October 3, 2022, https://jacobin.com/2022/10/russia-ukraine-war-explanation-class-conflict; Volodymyr Ishchenko, "The Minsk Accords and the Political Weakness of the 'Other Ukraine'", *Russian Politics* 8, no. 2 (2023), pp. 127–146, https://doi.org/10.30965/24518921-00802002; Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Class or regional cleavage? The Russian invasion and Ukraine's 'East/West' divide", *European Societies*, November 6, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2023.2275589.

pendent ideological articulation and political representation. The arguments regarding the war prevailing among the radical left tend to be idealistic and superficial, built on crude notions of imperialism.

These simplistic references extend to classical debates about supporting national liberation movements, often leading to ahistorical and even obscurantist comparisons between the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Third World national liberation struggles. Unlike the latter, which were tightly intertwined with processes of social revolution and modernization, possessed universal appeal (for example, Cuba and Vietnam), and were based on class alliances involving peasantry, workers, revolutionary intelligentsia, and national bourgeoisie, contemporary Ukraine lacks these elements. It lacks the social-revolutionary momentum that could challenge the dominant capitalist order, primarily striving for a comprador peripheralizing integration instead of developmental modernization, all grounded in a fundamentally different class alliance and articulating not universalist ideologies but particularistic nationalist identity politics (Ishchenko, 2022b).[6]

In light of drastically transformed material circumstances, the national question within anarchism and contemporary leftist theory and strategy needs to be reevaluated. The uncritical celebration of "self-determination", "subjectivity", and "agency", divorced from materialist analysis and class politics, and pursued to its logical extreme, is indistinguishable from the fringe right-wing utopias, such as far-right national-anarchism or libertarian anarcho-capitalism. In the current conjecture, this has resulted in a disconcerting lack of criticism, particularly concerning the ethnonationalist transformation of the contemporary Ukrainian state and society. The international community's failure to intervene in the complete ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh, largely overlooked by the left, serves as a stark reminder of the potential future if military reconquest were to occur in Crimea and Donbas, further underscoring the moral and political bankruptcy of these ideas.

Similarly, an abstract and superficial analysis is evident on the opposite side of the divide in the radical left, particularly in their unqualified rejection of weapon supplies without consideration of their possible use. For instance, this includes the vital need for anti-air defense systems to protect Ukrainian civilian infrastructure and lives.

Especially from anarchists, one might expect a greater ability to differentiate between support for the Ukrainian population and support for the Ukrainian state and its comprador elite. It would be necessary to have a more nuanced stance on the weapons question, a more articulated and coherent opposition to ethnonationalist assimilationist policies regardless of the side implementing them, and greater sensitivity to the diversity of Ukrainian society, divided by frontline and borders. Reviving class analysis and politics is pivotal for anarchists and the radical left to provide more appropriate responses to the international conflicts in the coming decades of geopolitical strife.

[6] Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Ukrainian Voices?", *New Left Review*, no. 138 (2022), pp. 1–10, https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii138/articles/volodymyr-ishchenko-ukrainian-voices.

Konfederatsiya revolyutsionnykh anarkho-sindikalistov (KRAS-MAT),

or Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists, is the Russian section of the International Workers' Association (AIT), founded in 1995.

First of all, it should be borne in mind that we are not talking about opposing the position of "all anarchists in Russia" in favor of the position of "all anarchists in Ukraine". As in most other so-called "countries" (and in fact, territories currently controlled by various states and their ruling cliques), both in Russia and Ukraine, there are anarchists who take anti-war and anti-militarist positions, as well as people who call themselves anarchists but support one side or the other in a war between states. Unfortunately, this is nothing new. This was the case during the First and Second World Wars, and during many other wars in the history of the 20th and 21st centuries. There are those who follow the anarchist principles of internationalism (proletarian cosmopolitanism) and anti-militarism – and there are those who support the ideas of "lesser evil", "democracy", "national liberation" and so on. As early as 1915, internationalist anarchists (Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Alexandra Berkman, comrades from Spain, etc.) called these latter people who "forgot their principles".

Do we now know something new? Only one thing is new: unfortunately, there are more such "anarchists who have forgotten principles" than one would like to think and believe. This makes us think seriously about the question of the crisis of the anarchist movement. Has not a significant part of it been torn away from its roots, from that fundamental thing that, in fact, makes anarchism exactly anarchist?

We are in the Russian section of M.A.T.[7] We do not believe that in this war we have encountered something fundamentally new, which has never happened before and which should force anarchism to abandon the most fundamental foundations of its own system of views. We have always believed and continue to believe that in the anarchist system of views, there is a "solid core" that cannot be abandoned without destroying the very essence of anarchism. Anti-militarism and denial of nations and national interests, refusal to support any states, and any alliances with the ruling classes – this is part of such a "hard core".

Do the differences among the anarchists have long-term sources? Yes, this is part of a long and deep process that unfolded after the Second World War. The old, traditional proletarian anarchism is being eroded and often gives way to "multi-class" and reformist neo-anarchism, which tends to accept the logic of the "lesser evil", "democracy", and compromises with the state and "less reactionary" capital. The "new" anarchism

[7] Международная ассоциация трудящихся (Meždunarodnaja asociacja trudjaščichsja) or International Workers' Association. (Editor's note)

borrowed too much from the statists, the Identitarians, and the adherents of "national liberation". We think it's time to differentiate and return to the roots of the "old school", uncompromising social revolution – once and for all.

Oleksandr Kolchenko

A Ukrainian political activist and anarchist; shortly after the annexation of Crimea, he was detained, tortured, and falsely accused of being a member of the far-right group Right Sector and of preparing terrorist acts in a mock trial and sentenced to 10 years. Now, he actively takes part in the fight against the Russian invasion.

Despite the deep fragmentation of the anarchist movement in Ukraine, Ukrainian anarchists began to prepare for a full-scale invasion sometime before February 24, 2022: they determined who would take up arms and who would volunteer. One way or another, the vast majority of them put aside their quarrels and disagreements on certain issues and stood up in defense of freedom. Remaining true to my anarchist and anti-fascist beliefs, I initially avoided participating in an organized anarchist movement to resist Russian aggression, because I was concerned that discussions on ideological issues, quarrels, and squabbles would take up time that could be used for training, education, and direct participation in combat operations – or more broadly, in something useful and constructive. (It is worth noting that from the moment I was released from prison until the full-scale invasion began, I participated in the anarchist movement only sporadically. First of all, there was a lack of time: work and everyday life took up all my time. But no less important was the anarchist movement's lack of any clear position on the Russo-Ukrainian war.)

I did not delve too deeply into the position of the Belarusian anarchist movement; I am not competent in this matter. But emigrants from everywhere from Belarus to Poland support Ukraine, and some Belarusian anarchists are fighting in the Ukrainian Defence Forces.

On the contrary, I can write a lot about the Russian anarchist movement. I have already written about it in one of my Facebook posts. And even to this day, despite the number of civilian and military casualties, entire cities wiped off the map, genocide, and ecocide, little has changed in their position in this regard. So I'll quote myself:

> I am very grateful to my Russian friends from the movement for their support throughout my imprisonment. I will never forget this and will try to support them as much as possible. But I cannot remain silent (and I am very sorry) about the fact that Russian anarchists, after the start of Russian military aggression, have not been able to launch a large-scale campaign against their state's imperial ag-

> gression against the rebellious Ukraine. (Either in the form of calls for a general anti-war strike or attacks on military facilities or defense industry enterprises. In any case, neither before prison nor in prison did I know about any such thing).

From the very beginning of the war in 2014, the KRAS sect (Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists) called the Russian aggression a "civil war" and took a so-called "equidistant" position – condemning both sides. The opportunity to have such a position is a privilege on the part of those who are in a safe (or relatively safe) place, who do not go to bed every night thinking: "Will a missile hit my house or someone else's house?"

On February 25, 2022, the day after the full-scale invasion began, KRAS released an "anti-war" statement. I will allow myself to analyze a few quotes from it: "We demand an immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of all troops to the borders and lines of separation that existed before the war began." But there is not a single word about what KRAS considers to be the starting point of the war: if they consider February 22, 2022, to be the starting point, then this is a direct play along with the Kremlin, the Russian state, because the territories that were occupied by Russia from 2014 to February 2022 remain outside the brackets; if they propose to withdraw "all troops to the borders" of 2014, then this is a demand *exclusively* to Russia.

"We call on soldiers sent to fight not to shoot at each other." If Russian soldiers put down their weapons, the war will end. If the Ukrainians put down their weapons, Ukraine will be conquered, and the war will not end but will continue – only in this case, Ukrainians will be forcibly mobilized by Russia for war with Europe (after all, Russian politicians and propagandists have repeatedly threatened other countries with war and missile attacks). The key to peace in Ukraine is not in Ukraine, but in Russia.

In March 2022, the anarchist women's group Moiras from Spain interviewed a Russian representative of the KRAS (as a non-imperialist [*sarcasm*]) about the events in Ukraine. In this interview, the representative of KRAS excluded the vast majority of Ukrainian anarchists from anarchists (again, what a non-imperial position [*sarcasm*]). In the same interview, the KRAS representative talks about the numerous anti-war protests in Russia. As you know, practice is the criterion of truth. However, I would like to remind you that the war is still going on – a year and a half after that interview. And all this time, Russians have been going to military registration and enlistment offices at the first call, when there were no criminal or administrative penalties for failing to report to the military registration and enlistment office; many went on their own initiative.

As for the other anarchist organization, Autonomous Action, they barely managed to issue a cautious condemnation of Russian aggression on the eve of the full-scale invasion. I find their "no to the war" position, which they use in their campaign materials, extremely pathetic. Because, in my opinion, any position that does not include the goal – most importantly – of contributing to the military defeat of Russia and the victory of Ukraine, is pathetic. They publish materials in memory of those anarchists

who fought in Ukraine against Russia. But, for example, an article by a great "analyst" Vladimir Platonenko about Dmitry Petrov has a lot of loud pathetic words and phrases, but the factual side is distorted. Take the phrase: "Nevertheless, the Ecologist[8] did not merge with the supporters of the Ukrainian state. It is no coincidence that he was not in the army, but in the home defense forces." According to the author's logic, it turns out that standing in the ranks of the army is something shameful and unacceptable for an anarchist. I have to disappoint him, because at the very least, the home defense is an integral part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the army. I sincerely feel sorry for those who read such analytics. I was also surprised by a section in the news editorial of Autonomous Action called "Trends of Order and Chaos: Our Russian World". If this were a joke, it would be quite cringey. But no, they write: "Belonging to the culture that has formed around the Russian language is not something to be 'canceled' or ashamed of. The 'Russian world' is a concept that should be wrested from the Kremlin crooks. In the process of overthrowing the regime, we will definitely succeed in it." I don't know whether it is worth explaining to our Western comrades how this "Russian world" was historically created. In a nutshell, it was created by colonizing "non-Russian" lands, by genocides and deportations. "Russian" identity is not ethnic, but cultural, which they themselves admit in their text. "Russian culture" is imbued with imperialism. That is, it is an identity that can be acquired and that can also be abandoned. They don't want to give up their imperial "Russian" identity, but want to carry this imperial cultural heritage into the future. Well, I'm not on the same road with such "comrades".

I would also like to mention BOAK (Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists). A few years ago, this organization wrote a text called "Anarchist Solution for Crimea", which made me very angry because I lost my home and served more than five years in prison due to the occupation of Crimea. So I will quote my other post from FB, this one from August 4, 2020, with my response to this article:

> Instead of condemning the Russian aggression and the Kremlin's imperial ambitions and the repressions that followed in the occupied territories (it is also worth noting that 2014 served as a turning point within Russia itself – from that time on, the level of repression only increased; As Aleksey Polikhovich noted when describing the situation, "We were serving prison time in a still-democratic country"); instead of condemning the growing military budget in a country where people permanently live like beggars, these anarchists found nothing better to do than to speculate about the status of Crimea. It takes so much nerve to refer to the "will of the majority of the territory's inhabitants" after six years of terror and repression in the occupied territory, annexed as a result of a "special military operation" launched on February 20(!), 2014, forgetting to mention how the public

[8] "Ecologist" was one of the pseudonyms of Russian anarchist and environmental activist Dmitry Petrov (1989–2023). (Editor's note)

> opinion of Crimeans was prepared for the so-called "referendum" by the state propaganda and kidnappings, how the "Russian World" supporters were brought in from Russia, how the "referendum" itself and the vote count were conducted, and that the observers were friends of Russia from European far-right organizations and parties! I would not even be surprised if these "anarchists" call the armed conflict with Russia in eastern Ukraine a "civil war".

A truly anarchist solution for Crimea would be an economic and armed struggle against the police state and tyranny, and a preparation for an uprising – so that those who are now in prison on trumped-up criminal cases, as well as those who were forced to leave the peninsula for a variety of reasons (from economic reasons to the threat of criminal prosecution), could return home and "jointly, equally, and in solidarity govern their home". However, as can be seen from the published reports on the activities carried out, the main activity of those who send reports on the actions is concentrated in Kyiv and the Kyiv region. And it would be more logical to suggest that "building ties with neighboring and distant regions" should be offered to Russian regions. "Federalization of relations between communities and regions is one of the main elements of the political concept of the revolutionary anarchist movement." I cannot but agree with this. Let the Far East, Siberia, Ural, Karelia, the North Caucasus, the Kuban, the Don, and other regions build "their own ties with neighboring and distant regions. Some of them may be closer to Russia, others to Ukraine." Perhaps Königsberg is closer to Germany, and Karelia to Finland. After all, the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation (which is super-centralized and is not actually a federation), in addition to being expensive for taxpayers (all those who produce wealth), also poses a threat to (not only) neighboring countries and liberation movements in them (including anarchist ones).

However, it is worth noting that since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, BOAK has, not only with words but also with deeds, joined the resistance to Russia's imperial war of aggression, both domestically through guerrilla actions and in Ukraine. Here, it is worth mentioning once again Dmitry Petrov, who was one of the organizers and leaders of the BOAK, and who joined the Ukrainian Defence Forces from the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Unfortunately, he was killed near Bakhmut. He left behind a rich legacy of deeds, texts, and memories from his comrades. He also left a message in the event of his death, in which he talks about his views and motivation to take up arms and join the Ukrainian Defence Forces. However, even in this message he is not free from the myth of a "free Russia"; he writes about the liberation of Russia from oppression – which is an oxymoron, because Russia itself is oppression for the people/peoples who inhabit it, as well as a constant threat and headache for its neighbors. Literally: "I did it for the sake of justice, for the protection of Ukrainian society, and for the liberation of my country, Russia, from oppression." If he were alive, after Ukraine's victory, we could discuss this with him over a glass of beer. Because,

although I think he was wrong, he remained a comrade who chose a side in a difficult time, and did not sit on two chairs in a leg-split, did not teach from a safe place what was right and what was wrong.

So, to briefly summarize: the Russian anarchist movement, despite its declared internationalism, has unfortunately, by and large, failed the test of real internationalism – except for anarcho-partisans (who are bringing the end of the war closer, to the extent of their strength and resources) and except for several individuals (some of whom have left Russia, some of whom have stayed). But, despite all this, I am glad that I still have comrades from Russia who really sympathize with us and wish Russia to be defeated and Ukraine to win.

I have not studied the position of the international anarchist movement on Russian aggression in Ukraine. I know that the anarchist movement in southern countries is more dedicated to repeating anti-NATO rhetoric and Russian myths about supposed "Ukrainian Nazism". I know that comrades from Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, and the British left support us and help us. For which I thank them very much. We will not forget it.

It is obvious to me that there has been no united left movement since the First International and the disputes between Marx and Bakunin. Which, in addition to purely personal grievances and purely political ambitions within the organization and the international socialist movement as a whole, were also of a fundamentally irreconcilable nature – both on the methods of fighting for socialism and on what is considered socialism. Even then, Bakunin warned of the danger and threat posed by statist, authoritarian versions of "socialism". It seems to me that, unfortunately, in those countries that were not under the occupation of the USSR, there is a greater belief in leftist unity – a greater level of tolerance for the Reds, for hammers and sickles, etc. And historical experience does not teach contemporaries.

As for me personally, since the first days of the full-scale invasion, I have only become more convinced of the vitality of the immortal popular anarchist element, which awakens at critical historical moments, in times of great ordeals. People were lining up at military recruitment offices – they were motivated not by the defense of the state, but by the defense of freedom. There were a lot of grassroots volunteer initiatives aimed at reducing each other's suffering and inconvenience: helping the army, helping evacuated IDPs (internally displaced persons), and helping those who remained in frontline settlements. There is no way to list them all, as there is a large kaleidoscope of grassroots initiatives. Large fundraisers for equipment and transport were closed in a matter of days, sometimes even hours.

As for the disagreements and discussions in the contemporary anarchist movement, they are inherent in the multicolored anarchist movement and have accompanied it throughout its existence. But after being lectured by nobodies, after the dismissals of the anarchist movement by armchair scholars, after the anti-NATO rhetoric and criticism

of supplying Ukraine with weapons so desperately needed to repel the aggression of fascist Russia, after the justification of Russian aggression and its crimes in Ukraine, after shifting the responsibility to Ukraine – whether because of "Nazism" in Ukraine or something else – on the part of some European anarchists, I became a little disappointed in the modern anarchist movement, for reasons I outlined in my answers to the previous questions. And to be honest, after that, all these discussions began to disgust me. So I stopped following them closely. Because regardless of the opinions of anarchists from other countries, I firmly believe that this war is existential, and our physical existence depends on its outcome. However, despite all these sad circumstances, international solidarity still exists, and this is very encouraging.

Translated by Max Ščur

Saul Newman

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The conflict in Ukraine is no doubt a difficult situation for anarchists to confront. On the one hand, many anarchists feel a moral and political obligation to support Ukrainian civil society against this totally unjustified Russian aggression. Everything must be done to resist this imperial expansion on the part of a neo-fascist Russian regime. Putin's justifications for the war – that it is a war of defense against neo-Nazis in Ukraine – are absurd. On the other hand, in supporting Ukraine, anarchists also find themselves in an awkward position, on the same side as a corrupt government supported by NATO and the United States. The cost of the conflict to both sides has been disastrous, and there seems to be no end in sight. So, anarchists find themselves amidst a war fought between two competing power blocs with rival geopolitical and military ambitions. As always, it is the ordinary civilians and soldiers who suffer. There are no easy answers here. Anarchists have always faced dilemmas of this kind. In the First World War, Peter Kropotkin supported the Allies against what he saw as German militarism and imperialism, and, in so doing, found himself on the side of the British, French, and Russian Empires. Some anarchists have resisted war altogether – seeing war as never justifiable – whereas others have taken up arms against fascism (for instance in the Spanish Civil War). I have no insights to offer here, and there is nothing new to be learned from this conflict. Each anarchist must wrestle with his or her own conscience and decide whether to join the fray of battle or take a position of principled conscientious objection

to war. Both positions are politically significant, and each involves enormous courage and brings great personal risk. I think it is important for anarchists to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and with the people of Russia who are suffering as a result of Putin's megalomania and who – increasingly – are prepared to disobey. All we can hope for is for the war to end and for Putin's system of tyranny to crumble.

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National Self-Determination and Anarchism in the War in Ukraine

From the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the main issue has been the self-determination of the Ukrainian people. Many anarchists reject the concept of the national self-determination of oppressed peoples such as Ukraine. Yet it has been advocated by anarchists since the birth of revolutionary libertarian socialism.

By "nations" I mean the same as "peoples" or "countries" or "nationalities" or "national communities." Whether people – such as the Ukrainians – are an independent nation is something for themselves to determine, rather than outside observers or invading imperialist armies. The same goes for deciding what sort of political and economic system they want. That is self-determination. In 1991, the Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly for independence from Russia, and so did most Russian-speakers.

National self-determination began as part of the bourgeois-democratic program developed in the age of capitalist democratic revolutions. This included the English Revolution of the 1640s, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, the South American and Caribbean revolutions, and other rebellions around the world. The bourgeois-democratic program included freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, land to the peasants, the right to bear arms, equality of all before the law, the election of officials… and the right of nations to self-determination.

The capitalist class has never lived up to its program, not consistently or fully. It has had to be forced, by the struggles and blood of the people. Now in the epoch of its decline, it is decreasingly able to maintain its democratic façade. The struggle for rights, even those of the bourgeois-democratic program, can only be fully won through the overthrow of capitalism and the state by the working class and all oppressed people.

For this reason, the struggle for national self-determination has become identified not with liberalism but with revolutionary socialism. Ignorant anarchists often claim

it was invented by Lenin. Lenin indeed used it as a slogan, but the problem with Lenin was not that he was too democratic! For him, national self-determination (like other democratic demands) was a device to win support for his party's rule from the working people of oppressed nations.

Lenin's goal was a centralized state, ruling a centralized economy, and ruled by his centralized party. Support for national self-determination, he believed, would lead peoples eventually to voluntarily merge into a homogeneous world. On the contrary, anarchists, while internationalists, are also decentralists, regionalists, and pluralists. They aim for a world of free peoples, without states or borders, tied together through networks and free federations. Anarchist belief in national self-determination is based on a very different goal than Leninism's.

Anarchists Supported National Self-Determination

From the beginnings of revolutionary anarchism, leading anarchists have supported national self-determination (without necessarily using that term). Mikhail Bakunin, often regarded as one of the "founders" of anarchism, declared:

> Nationality… denotes the inalienable right of individuals, groups, associations, and regions to their own way of life… the product of a long historical development… And this is why I will always champion the cause of oppressed nationalities struggling to liberate themselves from the domination of the state.

By "state" he means, here, the foreign state which dominates the oppressed nationality.

Peter Kropotkin is also often regarded as a "founder" of anarchist-communism. He wrote, "True internationalism will never be attained except by the independence of each nationality… If we say no government of man over man, how can [we] permit the government of conquered nationalities by the conquering nationalities?"

Kropotkin supported all national movements against foreign oppressors, such as the Indians and Irish against Britain, the Balkan peoples against Turkey, and the Poles against Russia. Unfortunately, he did not make a clear distinction between wars of oppressed people against their oppressors, and wars among imperialist powers. This led to his supporting France and its allies against the Germans in inter-imperialist World War I. A large majority of anarchists strongly disagreed with him.

The Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta, was a comrade of Bakunin and Kropotkin. He thought that Kropotkin was completely wrong to take sides in World War I, supporting one imperialist group over another. Malatesta wrote polemics against the minority of pro-war anarchists.

Yet he strongly supported wars of oppressed nations against imperialist domination. Malatesta supported the Libyan Arab fight against Italy's colonization and the Cuban war for independence from Spain. "Anarchists, being the enemies of all governments and claiming the right to live and grow in total freedom for all ethnic and social

groups, as well as for every individual, must necessarily oppose any actual government and side with any people that fight for their freedom."

It is also worth noting what Nestor Makhno and his Ukrainian movement thought about national self-determination. This should be seen in the context of the Insurgent Army fighting off nationalist armies, as well as fighting for independence from the Austrians, Poles, and, of course, the Russians.

The Makhnovist movement declared (in October 1919):

> Each national group has a natural and indisputable entitlement to ... maintain and develop its national culture in every sphere. It is clear that this... has nothing to do with narrow nationalism of the "separatist" variety... We proclaim the right of the Ukrainian people (and every other nation) to self-determination, not in the narrow nationalist sense ... but in the sense of the toilers' right to self-determination.

I have been citing the views of "classical" anarchists, but anarchists have continued to support the struggles of oppressed nations from then to the present time. The claim that (all) anarchists do not support national self-determination is false.

Self-Determination is Not Nationalism

Anarchist opponents of self-determination for oppressed peoples confuse it with "nationalism." But nationalism is only one program for achieving self-determination. It advocates the unity of the nation behind the national ruling class, denying class and other divisions within the country. It aims to set up a new state.

Anarchists do not support nationalism. Instead, they say that real, full, national independence can only be achieved through class struggle, linked up with the international revolution of the working class and all oppressed people. Nationalists and revolutionary anarchists only have a negative agreement: opposition to the dominating imperialist state (in this case, Russia). But their positive programs – what they want to build to replace the invader – are entirely different.

Anti-self-determination anarchists say that this program means supporting national states. Yet being in solidarity with a people does not have to mean supporting their state. But in most cases (so far) the people have supported (or at least accepted) a state. Anarchists have not (yet) been able to persuade them otherwise. This is their choice. Libertarian socialists do not refuse to support an oppressed people in struggle because they still have a state. Perhaps they will learn from their statist experiences over time, with the encouragement of the anarchists.

Ukrainian anarchists give no political support to the government. They do not vote for Zelensky nor support his party nor urge others to vote for the regime. Their opposition to the state is made clear. Meanwhile, they support workers who resist the neo-liberal, anti-union, austerity government, and business policies. They spread anarchist propaganda wherever possible.

Militarily, it would be optimal if the Ukrainian anarchists could have independent militia or guerrilla forces. Unfortunately, they are far too weak. Only one force was able to organize a fight back against the invaders: the state's official army. While Ukrainian anarchists have many reasons to oppose their state and its army, they should not oppose one thing about them: namely that they are resisting the Russian invasion. For anarchists to tell Ukrainians not to fight against the Russians because the Ukrainian army is the instrument of a capitalist state – would sound to most Ukrainian workers like a call to surrender!

Some Ukrainian anarchists have joined the army while others organize food distribution and other services, all with the long-term goal of eventually overturning all states. That is a tactical question. Strategically, in one way or another, anarchists give practical support to the Ukrainian armed forces against the Russians. This is for the sake of the national self-determination of the Ukrainian people and the goal of international anarchism.

PS: The above was written before the breakout of the latest stage in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The same basic methodology applies to that war as to the Russo-Ukrainian War. The Palestinian people are oppressed by the Israeli state. Anarchists should support them in their struggles for national self-determination. This does not mean support for the reactionary politics of Hamas and certainly not for its reactionary tactics. But Hamas' atrocities are no excuse for the massive atrocities and war crimes being committed right now by the Israeli state. The Palestinian people have right and justice on their side.

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Resistance and mutual aid rather than doctrinarism and defeatism

Anarcho-pacifism

In classical anarchist doctrine, the attitude towards armed conflicts between states was always negative. The war was perceived as a competition between states, elites, and capitals. Through wars, states spread patriotic sentiments that fuelled chauvinism, with the proletariat of individual countries quarreling among themselves and blocking the path to the development of internationalism. Militarism was one of the most important points in the anarchist's critique of states (including empires). Being a

reflection of power, hierarchy, and centralism, it created the greatest obstacle to human freedom. The mass and organized murder of people, according to anarchists, should have met with resistance from the proletariat. Anarchists have consistently taken up anti-military – and less often, pacifist – positions.

Among the leading anarcho-pacifists, we can mention: Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis and Bartholomeus de Ligt, Émile Armand and Louis Lecoin, Ernst Friedrich (with his famous book *War against War!*)[9], as well as those who oscillate on the borderline of anarchism, such as Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi. During World War I, "The International Anarchist Manifesto against the War" was published and signed by over 30 influential European and American anarchists, including Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Errico Malatesta, Saul Janovsky, and Juda Grossman-Roshchin. During World War II, the slogan "Neither fascism nor anti-fascism" was pushed by anarcho-syndicalist organizations in Latin America, mainly in Argentina and Uruguay, and the Bulgarian Anarcho-Communist Federation, as well as some groups in England and France. The French anarcho-pacifism of the time took absurd forms, expressing itself in the slogan "better slavery than war!" More recently, the American intellectual Noam Chomsky could be called the leading anti-war anarchist activist.

At present, the banners of pacifists display the slogan "Peace at all costs!" which is frequently reiterated by left-liberal intellectuals from Western countries, including professor of linguistics, activist, and journalist Medea Benjamin, political scientist Hall Gardner, and others. For the veteran of Polish anarchism, Jarosław Urbański, "An immediate end to the conflict, regardless of the geopolitical context, is necessary to avoid further bloodshed."[10] These slogans entail a closer association with various communists, Marxist, Trotskyist, and Maoist ideologies, which, ensnared in outdated doctrine, reduce their own dogmatism to slogans such as "No war but class war", "Neither Ukrainian nor Russian!" or "Neither NATO nor Putin!" In Russia, this attitude is represented by the leaders of the Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists – the International Workers' Association (KRAS). Anatoly Dubovik, a Ukrainian anarchist, has argued that the leaders of KRAS (professional historians) are anarcho-Putinists.

Doctrinairism of these forces, hidden under the blanket of "classical international internationalism", oddly enough leaves no room for international solidarity with Ukrainian anarchists and Ukrainian society; it is blind to the living, not mythical, anti-fascism that confronts the brutal imperialism of the Kremlin. Pacifism is good when it tries to prevent war, but not during war. Unfortunately, some "ideologically pure" comrades

[9] Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege! Guerre à la guerre! War against war! Vojnu vojně!* (Berlin: Freie Jugend, 1926).

[10] Jarosław Urbański, "Rzeź w Ukrainie trwa. Dziesiątki tysięcy zabitych i inwalidów wojennych po obu stronach konfliktu", *Rozbrat*, August 4, 2023, https://www.rozbrat.org/publicystyka/walka-klas/4862-rzez-w-ukrainie-trwa-dziesiatki-tysiecy-zabitych-i-inwalidow-wojennych-po-obu-stronach-konfliktu.

are stuck in rigid concepts detached from reality. But is it stupidity, cowardice, or plain defeatism? Our life is not black and white and does not stand still. There is no perfect purity in this world, except perhaps the laughter and tears of children. And Ukraine is flooded with these tears.

Anti-militarism

Fortunately, pacifism has never been the dominant current in the history of the anarchist movement, which is saturated with rebellions and uprisings. Anarchism is known for its direct action tactics, propaganda by deed, revolutionary terror, illegalism, and finally insurrectionism, which prove that violence and radicalism have always been equal parts of libertarian theories and practices. Anarchists, with weapons in hand, took part in the Paris Commune, in both World Wars, as well as in smaller armed conflicts, including national liberation struggles on different continents (e.g., in Ireland, Korea, Cuba, and India). They formed military formations during the civil war in Russia (e.g., the Makhnovist movement), in the Spanish Civil War, in the French Resistance, etc.

The most famous conflict over the attitude of anarchists to participation in the war became the *Manifesto of the Sixteen* (1916), signed, among others, by Peter Kropotkin, Jean Grave, Christiaan Cornelissen, Varlam Cherkezishvili, Charles Malato, and Paul Reclus. Thus, they gained the name of "anarchopatriots", "anarchomilitarists", or, to use the words of Errico Malatesta, "pro-government anarchists". Despite the mythology surrounding the views of Kropotkin and his followers on war, I am inclined to share the view that it was not a break with anarchism or a betrayal of libertarian ideals. In my opinion (and that of Ruth Kinna[11]) the position of the "prince of anarchy" was a consistent reaction to the situation. Kropotkin wrote to Maria Goldsmith already in 1897 that anarchists must stand by people opposing the oppression of both personality and economic, religious, and "all the more national" oppression. In turn, at the beginning of World War I, in the article "Anti-militarism: Was It Properly Understood?", published in the pages of *Freedom*, he declared:

> It being so, the question arises: How is anti-militarist propaganda to be conducted? The reply is evident: It must be supplemented by a promise of direct action. An anti-militarist ought never to join the anti-militarist agitation without taking in his inner self a solemn vow that in case a war breaks out, notwithstanding all efforts to prevent it, he will give the full support of his action to the country that will be invaded by a neighbor, whosoever the neighbor may be. Because, if the anti-militarists remain mere onlookers on the war, they support by their inaction

[11] See, e.g., Ruth Kinna, *Kropotkin: Reviewing the Classical Anarchist Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

> the invaders; they help them to make slaves of the conquered populations; they aid them to become still stronger, and thus to be a still stronger obstacle to the Social Revolution in the future.[12]

This quote has not lost its relevance to this day.

During the Second World War, several sections of the International Workers' Association (the Poles, Italians, Spaniards, Swedes, and French) agreed that "Fascism and Nazism must be crushed wherever they appear and at all costs. This is one of the most important tasks at the moment."[13] Well-known anarcho-syndicalist activists, such as Rudolf Rocker and Grigory Maksimov, were of a similar opinion. In Europe, here and there, anarchists fought against the Nazis; let us recall, for example, the Poles who took part in the Warsaw Uprising as part of the Syndicalist Brigade. Today, anarchists are militarily supporting the Kurds fighting in Rojava against Assad and the Islamists.

Kropotkin's above words are understandable for those, who, unlike pacifists, do not disagree with anarchists from Ukraine, Belarus, or Russia to fight for freedom in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; for those who do not hide the fact that Russian imperialism is as unrestrained as Western imperialism; for those, for whom solidarity is not an empty sound, who support the right of Ukrainians to their own geopolitical choice, to self-defense, to fighting the invader, who brings regression, fascism, violations of even minimal rights and civil liberties, genocide, dictatorship, camps, rape, political murders, torture of prisoners, forced removal of children, etc. This is the opinion of the anarchists associated with the Resistance Committee, fighting and dying on the front lines, such as the Russian Dmitry Petrov from the Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists, the Belarusian Zhvir, the American Cooper Andrews, or the Irishman Finbar Cafferkey – and those who are involved in helping, such as the Solidarity Collectives, ABC Dresden, ABC Galicja, Good Night Imperial Pride, and a number of other groups and unaffiliated anarchists from around the world, maliciously called "trench anarchists".

The myth of anti-fascist Russia and Nazi Ukraine

Opinion pluralism is desirable even in the libertarian environment, but imposing doctrinal formulas on everyone, especially on Ukrainian anarchists, is at least out of place. Instead of asking the Ukrainian libertarian movement directly what help the Western left, and some anarchists, need, building hierarchies in the global anarchist

[12] Peter Kropotkin, "Anti-militarism: Was It Properly Understood?", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism* 28, no. 307 (1914), p. 82.

[13] Vadim Damjer, *Zabytyj Internacional: meždunarodnoe anarho sindikalistskoe dviženie meždu dvumja mirovymi vojnami*, Vol. 2: *Meždunarodnyj anarho-sindikalizm v uslovijah "Velikogo krizisa" i nastuplenija fašizma: 1930–1939 gg.* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), p. 605.

movement (the West knows better), they repeat the myths of the Kremlin propaganda about "Nazi Ukraine".

But what about the aggressor state?

It is Russia that is rapidly becoming a neo-fascist state, which, combined with its imperial military policy, poses a greater threat to Ukraine than the USA, EU, or NATO. (Do these structures pose a threat to Ukraine at all?) Putin is a reactionary, he is taking his own country backwards in its development, he is trying to impose a regression on other countries, and he is also sending masses of Buryats, Dagestanis, Kalmyks, and Tuvans for slaughter... He only recognizes the language of force, he multiplies the repression of his own citizens, and he denies the right of other nations to independence. The cult of violence, hierarchy, and militarism in Russia is instilled from kindergarten, through state ceremonies, mass culture, and politics of memory. Moscow appropriated the right to be the center of world anti-fascism. The powerful propaganda apparatus, both internal and foreign, creates a myth in which Russia won Nazism, in which there is no question of neo-Nazi militias fighting in Ukraine, such as Rusich, Ratibor, and the Imperial Legion, not to mention the degenerates from the Wagner Group. Didn't the Militant Organization of Russian Nationalists (with ties to the presidential administration) murder the well-known lawyer Stanislav Markelov and the young journalist Anastasia Baburova in Moscow, near the Kremlin? Winston Churchill was wrong about many things, but he was right about one thing: "The fascists of the future will call themselves anti-fascists."

Ukraine is not and has never been a fascist state. Despite some actions in the field of historical politics, as in every country, the ultranationalists have never managed to dominate the Supreme Council of Ukraine. In fact, there were various parties, even pro-Russian ones (!). There are elections and a rotation of power. Has anything like this happened in Russia over the last 20 years? Zelensky, who has Jewish roots, spoke Russian on a daily basis and did business with Russia. The Azov Assault Brigade, consisting of a multitude of nationalities with different views (e.g., former commander Denis Prokopenko is a Karelian), showed incredible heroism during the defense of Azovstal. In addition, it officially condemned Nazism and Stalinism, undergoing an ideological transformation unlike the couch-potato anarchists.

Who among the current critics of Ukraine visited Ukraine and when was the last time? As a person with family ties to Ukraine and a regular visitor to Ukraine before the war, I have never encountered discrimination because of my the Russian language. I know the pros and cons of this society. And yet Ukraine does not impose anything on anyone, does not occupy, does not attack other countries. It has a dynamically sprouting civil society, strengthening after regular social upheavals (the Revolution on Granite 1990, the Orange Revolution 2004, Euromaidan 2013–2014) and giving grounds for spreading direct democracy.

Every form of imperialism and colonialism has been and is bad. But the world does not begin and end west of Warsaw. The Western scientific and activist perspective seems

to have forgotten what the largest country in the world is and what its history is. It is Russia, ruled by a former KGB/FSB official who misses the days of Russian imperial greatness and is personally responsible for numerous murders and attempted political assassinations. It is surprising, therefore, that Russian imperialism, which is rooted in the culture and political tradition of Russia (tsarist, Bolshevik, Putinist), is not noticed. The faces change, the essence remains the same. Chechnya, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Ukraine. In fact, Belarus is under the imperial dome of the Kremlin. *Russkiy mir* (Russian world), wishing to restore its former imperial power, will not stop at Kyiv. In the Kremlin's vision, places such as Moldova and Transnistria, the Baltic states, Kazakhstan, and perhaps Poland and the countries of Central Europe all belong to Russia's imperial reach. The boots of Russian soldiers have been on the heels of Russian "culture" for centuries.

The fight against Putinism, which is a priority for the inhabitants of our region, does not require worshiping NATO or Western imperialism (or any other group). The victory of Russia will enslave Ukraine, purges will begin, camps will be established (which is already taking place in the occupied territories), and repression will reach unprecedented proportions. Europe will be plunged into uncertainty and international structures that would not function without it will falter. Belarus, with thousands of political prisoners (including about 30 anarchists), will lose its chance of liberation.

Anarchism

Anarchism is not a closed doctrine, imagining the world in rigid terms of a black-and-white dichotomy, but rather it contains a more complex range of ideas, sometimes naïve and utopian, sometimes realistic and pragmatic. The latter includes helping Ukraine, through which anarchists try to find a common language with reality.

Anarchists do not need to reinvent the wheel. In a situation of war, instead of the repeated mantra of "No war but class war", one should turn to mutual aid, solidarity, internationalism, and the right to self-determination and self-defense. We should reject pacifism and the push for "peace at all costs" through diplomatic negotiations between the US and NATO on the one hand and the Kremlin on the other, and Ukraine's subjectivity should be defended in this conflict. Just as Kropotkin said about the armed conflict of imperial Prussia and the Entente, that it was "a war not of armies alone, but a war of nations", so today it is a war of nations, not imperialisms. A war of values, not alliances.

Anarchism is a practical philosophy; it is about action and critique of dogma. The "trench anarchists" do not have any illusions about Zelensky and his corrupt party, Servant of the People; they are not fighting for the Ukrainian state. Despite this, they see huge differences between the political culture of Russia and Ukraine. So-called "anarcho-militarists" are aligned with the people of Ukraine; they experience its fate and, unlike the Western supporters of "peace" and the proletariat, they have the right to speak on its behalf. Ukraine's victory may offer a chance for further changes in

society, for the development of direct democracy, for the liquidation of the oligarchic system, and finally for the nation to regain its own country. The dignity of society, which they trade in the West, has never been taken away from the Ukrainians, which is clearly evidenced by the heroic defense of the country in the first phase of the war and queues for territorial defense units. After winning freedom, the time will come to fight for land, jobs, and self-governance. An armed nation will no longer be a pawn in the great game of politicians and oligarchs. Ukraine's victory may also contribute to potential changes in Russia, which in its current state is a constant threat to the world.

One could multiply quotes from the classics and theoreticians of anarchism, but what dictates life itself is the superior value. I will end with one quote from the Belgian anti-militarist Frans Verbelen: "Reality blows away the most beautiful theories as a storm the sand in the desert."[14] Let's try to be like stone, not sand. Anarchists after the war will have a lot of work to do: reorganizing and rebuilding the movement, focusing on extremely important ecological issues, fighting for labor and social rights, building trade unions, confronting right-wing organizations and new authorities, etc. Then, as now, the material help of Western comrades, their experience and ideas will be needed. Is the "solidarity" written on our banners just an empty word? We must finally bridge the gulf between Eastern and Western anarchism. It is up to us whether we can bring about the future we dream about. In this undertaking, Ukraine is an opportunity and a test for us.

[14] Frans Verbelen, "Why Belgian Anarchists Fight", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Comunism* 28, no. 307, (1914), p. 87.

REVIEWS

THE LIVING COMMUNISM OF FRIENDSHIP

Bartłomiej Błesznowski and Cezary Rudnicki (eds.), Metaphysics of Cooperation (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 548 p. ISBN: 9789004546653

Metaphysics of Cooperation offers the first English translations of key works from the philosopher Edward Abramowski, foremost known as the intellectual voice of the Polish cooperative movement (circa late-19th – early-20th century) and the conceptual progenitor of "stateless socialism". A diverse thinker, the book is organised into translations of his writings on psychology, politics, cooperatives, ethics, and sociology. Each section is accompanied by newly commissioned essays, placing them in dialogue with contemporary social and political issues. While *Metaphysics of Cooperation* contains many generative points of engagement, in this short review I will focus on Abramowski's ethics. I address his essay *Ethics and Revolution* as well as shorter treatises on the life ethics of friendship and friendship unions. Centering friendship in politics challenges us to imagine political belonging beyond comradeship's orientation toward public, collective, ritualised practices. The living communism of friendship calls us to live communist politics in the here and now of our everyday affairs, while critically avoiding the authoritarian morality and spiritual individualism some anarchisms succumb to in taking on such a task.

> *We are not communists because we are "activists" or want to "impact society", but because we want to live radically differently. Talking about friendship emphasizes this desire for a different kind of life.*
> Mika, Vilja, Valter,
>
> *We Belong to Each Other: Letters and Writings on the Politics of Friendship* (2023)[1]

[1] Mikael Brunila, Vilja Saarinen, and Valter Sandell, *Kuulumme toisillemme – kirjeitä ja kirjoituksia ystävyyden politiikasta* [We belong to each other: Letters and writings on the politics of friendship] (Helsinki: Khaos Publishing, 2023).

The soul of solidarity is friendship.
Edward Abramowski,
"Friendship Unions II" in *Metaphysics of Cooperation* (2023)

Over the course of the months I was engaging with *Metaphysics of Cooperation,* I was invited to a book launch in Helsinki dealing with the politics of friendship. It is notable to suddenly have two books arrive before me that take up friendship as a central relation of communist politics – centuries apart. Adding to the mystery of this occurrence, I myself have rarely broached the topic of a communist politics of friendship in my own research. Perhaps that is due to finding my own history of friendships volatile and contradictory. Far from an ideal model for envisioning a world beyond capitalism, I am left with the feeling that friendship is a social institution deeply mediated by the manifold violences of capital – not unlike familial or collegial relations.

Regardless of having arrived at the ideal of friendship in very different historical circumstances, its centrality in Abramowski and the Finnish circle's thought is clearly based in the felt need for a politics grounded in a life ethics. Friendship for these thinkers is the basis of a way of life philosophy: a politics committed to the reconciliation of the political virtues of communism and the totality of our everyday existence.[2] Abramowski advances the following "absolute commandments" for his life ethics of friendship:

> 1. The only sin is harming humans, because it diminishes human strength. 2. The only virtue is friendship, mutual aid, and community, because they increase the strength of everyone. 3. No authority should be recognized, because any authority seeks to coerce and oppress and thus hinders the development of people and the species. 4. Do not impose any internal yoke on yourself, because it hampers development and the main goal even more. 5. Destroy everything that divides and humiliates people, i.e., property, wealth, and honors, because, as the Sermon on the Mount says, "the sun shines equally for all and all are sons of one God." 6. Spread complete communism in life—customs and institutions from which all exploitation and selfishness are eliminated. (242)

As Kamil Piskala notes in his contribution to the volume, Abramowski's ethical communism developed as a response to the historical turning point of the dominant socialist movement toward statism or "ministerialism" together with economic gradualism. In both cases, the fulfilment of communist virtues is relocated as an *eventual* horizon, to be only realized as a living ethics after the course of an indefinite period of histor-

[2] The Finnish circle develops their ethics of friendship through Agamben's writing on friendship in Aristotle, Tiqqun's reading of this text, and a circle in Atlanta who wrote the text "How to Start a Fire", amongst other sources (Anonymous, "How to Start a Fire", The Anarchist Library, November 7, 2017, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-how-to-start-a-fire).

ical sacrifices (246). Lamenting on this separation of politics from life, Abramowski comments: "[…] truly revolutionary ideas are always merely a sort of showy feature of people; their whole life is contained in words: we are revolutionists when we speak at meetings, when we have discussions, when we formulate our wishes for the social future […]." (199) And outside of such ritual displays of political affiliation? Abramowski continues: "like everyone else, he cares for money, for property; he cares first of all for his personal interests, calls for police assistance, uses state institutions, is enthusiastic about the national army, victories, and the power of the state […]." (200)

Notably, it's not only Abramowski and my Finnish friends who made a turn toward a revolutionary life ethics as a response to the problems of the institutionalization of communist life virtues by the representative Politics of the state. Piskala places Abramowski in the "anti-positivist" turn at the turn of the 20th century:

> The ideological crisis in the socialist movement was significantly influenced by the anti-positivist turn—affirming individualism, vitalism, and a critique of determinism—in the intellectual culture of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. These reorientations were expressed, among other places, in Sorel's writings, which were inspired by Bergson's "philosophy of life," in the attempts undertaken by young socialist intellectuals in Germany, to reconcile Marxism with Nietzsche's philosophy, in George Bernard Shaw's project of ethical socialism, and in Alexander Bogdanov's ideas. (253)

One of the critical problems of such a life ethics can be its reliance on ontological presuppositions of what the *right* kind of existence should look like.[3] After I shared the above commandments with one comrade they responded: "interesting, very Christian." And it's true; ethical philosophy has a hard time avoiding a certain religiosity. In putting forth an ideal of the "good life", one risks depending on a certain metaphysics of the "good": a norm set above existence through which existence may be judged. It has been on these grounds that materialist philosophy and what is sometimes called process philosophy reject ethics in favor of an analysis of the movements and contradictions alive in shared historical conditions.[4] As Marx triumphantly stated in the *German Ideology*, the materialist theory of history "shattered the basis of all morality, whether the morality of asceticism or of enjoyment".[5]

[3] For a critique of communist ethics grounded in ontology, see Susan Buck-Morss, "A Communist Ethics", in Slavoj Žižek, ed., *The Idea of Communism 2* (London & New York: Verso, 2013), pp. 57–76.

[4] For a significant consideration of ethics in Marxism, see Egidijus Mardosas, *Revolutionary Aristotelianism and Ideology* (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming).

[5] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 443.

While Abramowski certainly builds his ethics on a metaphysics – which the title of the volume frankly emphasizes – the ideals of cooperativism, fraternity, and friendship are carefully developed to avoid positing any more positive prescriptions beyond the commandments to do what will expand one's own possibility for free self-development; a self-development Abramowski argues can only be fully achieved through a form of socialization freed of property, the state, and labor (212). Therefore, in Abramowski's ethics politics begins and ends with a need born within the individual, but this subjective need is only to be achieved through socialization, a point developed in Cezary Rudnicki's essay "The Metamorphoses of Subjectivity, the Transitions of the Social" (167–186). Here the individual arrives at a new need: the need for friendship, which we will find is nothing other than the social need for communism.

And just as communism is a living form found in every individual, so is what opposes it. Abramowski poignantly names the ethics of capital a "police ethics". Such an ethics points to how the institutions of private property, the state and labor exist only through a form of a-socialization administered through the everyday terror of the police and prison system. A police ethics is therefore an ethics of the individual who seeks the fulfilment of their needs through this social order of terror. Strikingly, foreseeing the "social monster" of the coming era of state socialism in Poland and elsewhere, Abramowski perceived how the socialists who saw the state as a vehicle for communist socialization succumb to the very same ethics as the capitalists. Whether revolutionary or reformist, in using the police apparatus of the state to enforce communist life virtues, those virtues would be encountered by the individual as a foreign, hostile, coercive force against the need born in them as an individual living in a capitalist social form. Abramowski concludes, in this situation: "communism would not only be something extremely superficial and weak, but, moreover, it would turn into statehood, oppressing the freedom of the individual, and instead of the old classes it would create two new ones – citizens and officials, whose mutual antagonism would necessarily manifest itself in all areas of social life" (194).

If the communist revolution can only be fulfilled through a concomitant ethical revolution at the level of each individual, the question that must be answered is: how then to live a communist life in a reality that opposes it? For me, returning to my opening quandary on troubles I've had with friendships, the question could be: How to live up to the communist ideal of friendship while living in a social reality shaped by so much hostility, competition, and private interest? I, like I believe many of you, struggle to find the social tools to maintain and grow those joyful, sweet, co-sensations of togetherness that come with sharing a life in common with friends. For Abramowski among all the factors of life propagated under capitalism there is only one that may be this guide – solidarity: "the coupling between my interests and life and the well-being of other people" (208). To maintain solidarity for even those that do not share your same condition is the first step toward a communist ethics of friendship – that is, affirming social need over individual economic advancement and self-interest. Importantly, the cultivation of

practices of solidarity are not simply left to the responsibility of each and every ethical individual, but are rather advanced through a strategy of building communes, social centers, cooperatives, friendship unions, and numerous other communist forms of life that could defend our relationships from the police ethics of capital. It is through the growth of these resilient fabrics of mutual aid that worlds may grow; providing us with the social support to resolve conflicts amicably without the terror of police, courts, and shame; to make shelter a right to all through the housing commune; to defend the right to "pleasures of an aimless nature" (217) through an anti-work imperative of cooperativism centered on the growth of free time and the eventual abolition of the wage. Looking at my own life as someone who has been involved in various autonomous centers, cooperatives, and labor organizations, I can say they do better accommodate ethical friendships, but each face their own limits and contradictions in achieving the ultimate conclusion of communist friendship Abramowski puts forth.[6]

The social measures drafted for fulfilling communist friendship resolve many of my own worries about a politics of ethics, but leave one essential question unanswered: Why not call comradeship the soul of solidarity? In dialogue with Jodi Dean, I relate to her position that political friendships risk turning politics into an exclusive and even esoteric form of group belonging.[7] Comradeship, by contrast, is argued to depend on a certain alienation from "the demands of personal life to which friends must attend". The comrade, is "not someone you chose", but rather arrives to one out of the exigences of shared conditions of struggle.[8] Dean hence argues that in comradeship we affirm a "generic" and universalizing mode of belonging. Consciously alienated from both a preferential politics of likes and dislikes and identity attributes assigned to us by state and capital – that is, private property, citizenship, race, and gender – comradeship is seen as a sacrifice the individual makes for the collective (which for Dean is synonymous with the Party) in sight of a common egalitarian horizon.

Regardless of Dean putting comradeship in a new light – and I do think it's worth picking up her book – I see the critical shortcoming of the comrade in its neglect and even hostility toward the personal. I would say alongside my Finnish friends and Abramowski, that communist friendship by contrast is an absolute refusal to separate politics and life.[9] In communist friendship politics isn't demarcated as something that happens in public, at a reading group, in a meeting with a set of goals and causes that always seem

[6] For example, take the brilliant analysis of how contemporary cooperatives in Poland struggle to avoid turning an "ethical life" into an exclusive commodity of the middle-class, see Aleksandra Bilewicz, "A Path to a Countermovement?", *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 27, no. 1 (2018), pp. 133–167.

[7] Jodi Dean, *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging* (London, New York: Verso, 2019), p. 73.

[8] Dean, *Comrade*, p. 74

[9] Vilja refers to the Wages for Housework movement as a significant step in refusing these demarcations, and states: "To be dangerous together we must take care of each other" (Brunila, Saarinen, and Sandell, *Kuulumme toisillemme,* p. 35).

to be somehow beyond our immediate relations. Friendship is a life politics that takes absolutely seriously our relations with each other, while not losing site of the broader historical material conditions that in every instance threaten to engulf our encounters. And just as Dean challenges us to reclaim comradeship against what would cast it out of our current political imaginaries, there is an urgent need to reclaim the friend from the myriad forces at present that enclose, profit, and dispose us from the most vital of our political capacities – that power of togetherness which friendship embodies. In the end, perhaps what we need the most right now and what we can powerfully draw from Abramowski's work is the idea of comradely-friendships: a term that could clearly signify the refusal to separate communism from the totality of our lives. Rounding out this desire for synthesis, I conclude with a dear excerpt from Marx, observing in France how communism makes the goals of politics life itself – that is, a means to its own ends:

> When communist artisans associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need–the need for togetherness–and what appears as a means becomes an end. In this practical process the most splendid results are to be observed whenever French socialist workers are seen assembled. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer required as means of contact or bringing together. Company, association, and conversation (which again has togetherness as its end) are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of their life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.[10]

Noah Brehmer

[10] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973), pp. 154–155.

RECONTEXTUALIZING RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA'S MARXIST-HUMANISM FOR CONTEMPORARY LEFT POLITICS

Kevin B. Anderson, Kieran Durkin, Heather A. Brown (eds.), Raya Dunayevskaya's Intersectional Marxism: Race, Class, Gender, and the Dialectics of Liberation (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 350 p. ISBN 9873030537173.

Raya Dunayevskaya is an intriguing author, whose thinking was not forged in academia but through decades of social struggles. Her humanist approach, sensitive to the variety of emancipatory struggles across the globe, is still inspiring in the 21st century. This collection of essays, edited by Kevin B. Anderson, Kieran Durkin, and Heather A. Brown, aims to present Dunayevskaya as a thinker who is still able to address problems within the contemporary emancipatory movement.

The editors explicitly argue that Dunayevskaya's philosophy can overcome contemporary divisions within the left movement. The editors in their introduction point out that this movement is divided according to preferred topics and analytical approaches. They aim to present Dunayevskaya's dialectical method as capable of representing particular struggles as elements of a single movement for universal emancipation. The authors describe this aspect of Dunayevskaya's thinking using the term intersectionality, which was not used by Dunayevskaya herself. Nevertheless, according to editors, exactly this term is appropriate to point out the power which Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism has. The editors chose this anachronistic concept consciously. "Intersectional Marxism" means the rejection of both theoretical and practical competition of various social struggles, where typically but not exclusively the economic axis of social struggle gains the upper hand. Instead, Dunayevskaya's intersectionality refuses this competition and suggests the convergence of various social struggles. The book is a collection of essays divided into four sections, each presenting one aspect of her thought. Among the authors of the essays are not only scholars but also journalists and activists engaged in various struggles around the world. The overall coverage of topics is very diverse; nevertheless, each essay stands out on its own and any reader can find an essay that suits their interests.

Among the essays, there is not a single one that introduces Dunayevskaya's life and philosophy. This might be slightly surprising for a reader who does not already have knowledge about the tradition of Marxist-Humanism. Instead, the reader must gather notes on Dunayevskaya's writings and her life in the various essays where the authors find it appropriate to mention these details. An approach that introduced the subject of Marxist-Humanism and Dunayevskaya's life at the beginning of the book would have brought clarity and made the reading easier.

Dunayevskaya did not receive formal education in philosophy and therefore she devoted a lot of effort to self-study, as is acknowledged in the first essay written by Anderson and Hudis (24-25), which also provides the most context regarding her life. As a Lithuanian immigrant to the USA, she was from the beginning engaged in social struggles. She is famous for being Leon Trotsky's secretary; nevertheless, she became a respected theoretician after she broke with Trotskyism. In 1953, Dunayevskaya moved towards Hegelianism and the idea of the spontaneity of masses, which represented the development of a critical approach towards vanguardism. Specifically, she began to understand the vanguard party as potentially both revolutionary as well as counter-revolutionary. She was a member of the Trotskyist Workers Party, where she was engaged in the oppositional Johnson-Forest Tendency. After a broader disagreement with the party's direction, Dunayevskaya founded News and Letters Committees. At this point, she was told to create a theoretical piece of writing that would summarize the organization's philosophy. This series of events led to the publishing of her first book – *Marxism and Freedom*. Even without formal philosophical training, Dunayevskaya became a notable theorist late in her life, meaning that her career path differed significantly from that of other Hegelian Marxists. Besides writing several books, she maintained a lively correspondence with other intellectuals of her time (for example, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm), who also inspired her thinking. Dunayevskaya's life and work are fascinating and show an alternative path in which theory is developed in correspondence with ongoing social struggles.

Dunayevskaya's Marxism is inseparably intertwined with Hegel's dialectic, which is one of the major topics within the book. Dunayevskaya's defence of Hegel brings two crucial elements to her theory. First, following the logic of Marxist-Humanism, Dunayevskaya denied the radical epistemological break in Marx's writings that was most popularized by her contemporary – Louis Althusser. Instead of the supposed division between the philosophical and scientific phases of Marx's thinking, Dunayevskaya acknowledged the significance of philosophy, and Hegel also, for Marx's later writings, even though she noted the rhetorical change within the so-called mature Marx's writings. Hudis and Anderson in their opening essay point out that Dunayevskaya's dialectic differs significantly from the approach of negative dialectics developed by Theodor W. Adorno (30). Contrary to Adorno's emphasis on first negation and then mere destruction of the existing oppressive system, Dunayevskaya is very well aware of the responsibility of a revolutionary movement and stresses the role of positive movement in the dialec-

tic and the related question of "what happens after". The second crucial element of Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism is the emphasis on the spontaneity of the people instead of the instrumental vanguardist approach of the communist parties of the time. Hegel's dialectical self-movement was an appropriate tool to reject this approach. According to Alessandra Spano, whose essay focuses on the importance of Hegel for Dunayevskaya's emancipatory theory, emancipation in this Hegelian interpretation implies that the essence of emancipation lies in freedom and self-development of the emancipatory subject.

Another heritage of Hegel's thought is the universality of emancipation focused on the concept of freedom. The authors across various essays stress that for Dunayevskaya emancipation was not only about the end of capitalism, but also the end of patriarchy and racism. This is the essence of what the editors of the book called "intersectional Marxism"; namely, a Marxism that is focused on the critique of capitalism, but refuses economic determinism and argues for the impossibility of hierarchically ordered emancipatory goals (13). Intersectional Marxism is a struggle against all forms of oppression at once, in which feminism and anti-racism are not only compulsory add-ons but essential features of any emancipatory praxis. All these struggles can be subsumed under the struggle for freedom, which is not only an essential concept for Dunayevskaya but also for Marx and contemporary Marxist-Humanists, as Peter Hudis's essay points out (70). Intersectionality is further related to another concept Dunayevskaya is famous for: state-capitalism as a critical perspective on the supposed emancipatory development in countries with actually existing socialism. She criticized state-capitalism for not being truly emancipatory because the revolutions in these countries stopped at the first negation (the abolition of private property) of the dialectic movement and remained highly authoritarian with top-down control of the state. Therefore, these states did not manage to address the human need for freedom. From this point of view, she welcomed emancipatory struggles within Eastern European societies such as the Prague Spring, the Hungarian revolution, and the labour movement Solidarność. She saw these movements as confirmation of her emphasis on spontaneity and the inevitability of revolts under any oppressive regime because of human beings' inherent drive for freedom.

The emphasis on spontaneity and refusal of vanguardism has far-reaching significance for praxis, which is an essential point for Dunayevskaya. The relation of theory and practice is crucial for her understanding of emancipatory struggle. Lilia D. Monzó, in one of the most intriguing essays of the book, points out that the critical, emancipatory subjects "*theorize* about their activity, and the so-called intellectual must be grounded in struggle through active participation" (155). From the point of view of Marxist-Humanism, there is no need for external intellectuals to judge the active members of the movement.

Adrienne Rich, a feminist author who followed Dunayevskaya her whole life and engaged in conversation with her just a year before Dunayevskaya's death, noticed that Marxist-Humanism had less significance in academia (93). One reason might be its crit-

ical stance towards academia and diminution of the significance of experts with formal education for emancipation. Nevertheless, Paul Mason argues that Marxist-Humanism is the future of Marxism because, under the conditions of dehumanizing capitalism, emancipatory theory needs to put humanity back into the centre of interest (204).

Despite many intriguing essays and a very interesting connection between Dunayevskaya's thinking and contemporary dilemmas of the emancipatory movement, I would like to point out several imperfections that this otherwise captivating book contains. The first is a tension between the overwhelming impression the reader gets and the explicit goals of the editors. From my point of view, Dunayevskaya's position is strongly founded on a critique of intellectual elitism within the left movement. Nevertheless, the explicit addressees of the book, namely the "intellectual left" (4), rather undermine Dunayevskaya's authentic position and reinstate the problematic division between intellectuals and "non-intellectuals", whoever they might be. From this point of view, the existing contradiction between the Marxist focus on class and capital and so-called "identity politics", which the editors wanted to help overcome, is based not in theory but in political praxis, and I doubt that any collection of essays can overcome that. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge this is a general problem in the way that knowledge is produced in capitalist society.

The second critical point is the lack of theorization of political organization vis-à-vis the critical approach to vanguardism. This results in a rather naïve and illogical argument from Paul Mason for the teleology of Marxism implying the predetermination of emancipation, which is purely a result of the inevitability of revolts in capitalism (189). Even though one could agree that the accumulation of capital is accompanied by "accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation"[1] which implies the inevitability of revolts against this oppressive system, it is logically false to assume that revolts imply emancipation. This problem is touched on by Peter Hudis in his writings, but unfortunately mostly avoided in the reviewed book.

The third critical point concerns the choice of topics. While the book itself is a very interesting collection of differing topics, any discussion of Marxist-Humanism raises several issues. The most important is the possible allegation of anthropocentrism. Whereas this might be a minor problem within the anti-humanist reading of Marx, it is a crucial topic for Marxist-Humanism, which is centred around the concept of humanity or human nature. Another topic that might be interesting to read more about is Dunayevskaya's concept of state-capitalism. It is understandable for the editors to believe that this concept has little relevance thirty years after the fall of the Soviet bloc. Nevertheless, this might disregard the fact that, especially in the context of Eastern Europe, any thinkable legitimacy of both the parliamentary and non-parliamentary left is closely related to the illegitimacy of the actually existing socialist regimes. This is, unfortunately, a lived reality of various struggles and, for these reasons, it is also

[1] Karl Marx, *Capital I: A Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), p. 451.

crucial to theorize the specific history of Eastern Europe, first as a frontier of the Soviet Union, later as a frontier of neoliberal capitalism and the links between contemporary emancipatory struggles and the past. The concept of state-capitalism served (and to some extent still serves) as a means of disregarding the history of real socialism as something irrelevant to emancipation. This topic is still relatively vivid in Eastern Europe, and one would expect that a book on Dunayevskaya would critically engage with it. Despite these objections, I need to emphasize that the reading of the book is enjoyable, and I can recommend it to anyone who is interested in further theoretical and challenging insights into this branch of Marxism.

In their overall effort to present Dunayevskaya's thinking not as that of another dead author, but as an inspiring and still relevant thinker, the authors have succeeded. They have brought together an intriguing collection of essays that present Dunayevskaya's thought as that of a contemporary thinker who still has a lot to say. A reader of this collection can expect to gain knowledge about Dunayevskaya's dialectic method and her intersectional synthesis of various social struggles. Nevertheless, all of it is presented not as the history of political thought, nor as a guide to revolution, but as an interplay of political theory and political praxis. This book presents the contradictions and plurality of topics and tactics within the emancipatory movement not as weaknesses but as strengths that are yet to be discovered.

Jonáš Kreisinger

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