

Anarchism in Eastern Europe

Letters from Poland

Bob McGlynn

FE Note: The following letter comes to us from Bob McGlynn of *On Gogol Boulevard*, a bulletin of Soviet and Eastern Bloc opposition to the official regimes OGB is available from 151 1st Ave., No. 62, NY NY 10003 and attempts to link individuals and groups in the West with the existing and emerging trends in the East for mutually supportive actions.

McGlynn wrote us June 24: “We are unsure of the date of this letter, but it’s from the last year. We are also unsure whether RSA still exists or whether they all joined the antiwar and ecology group, ‘Freedom and Peace,’ particularly the Gdansk chapter.”

Greetings from Poland!

We are writing this letter as Polish anarchists—participants in Ruch Spoleczenstwa Alternatywnego (RSA)—Movement of Alternative Society. We have been working in organized form since June 1983; since September 1983, we’ve been publishing our own magazine—illegal, of course, just like the whole movement.

Our anarchism comes not from the lecture of classics, but from analysis of present situation in Poland. Everything in our country belongs to the State—means of production, communication and repression are monopolized by one party (communist) government. The only exception to this rule are agriculture (70% private) and Catholic church with its own organization and press.

Totalitarian rule gives birth to totalitarian opposition—fanatically anti-communist (that’s why it is so admiring of capitalism and Western world), nationalistic, dependent on church, intolerant of people and ideas, and, just like government, it uses censorship and calls these that do not agree with its ideas, “non-patriotic.” The only thing that differs them is lack of political police by opposition.

But there are worse things. The main problem of opposition is its stagnation and paralyzing of street demonstrations, so disliked by Lech Walesa and Church. Organizers of such demonstrations are condemned by them as provocateurs and police agents. Both Church and opposition prefer to wait for a good will of government or pressure from countries, while being content with a role of mediator between government and society. (Most of all, Catholic church never prospered as good as after the 1981 declaration of martial law.)

Fortunately, there is a change lately, as more people (Solidarity activists included) are turning their backs to Church and opposition leaders. There is no acceptance for passive opposition while conditions of living are worsening drastically.

This is a chance for radical groups that do not want to exchange socialism for capitalism, but desire to negate the system as a whole. This direction is popular mainly among young people, especially counter-culture youth, who do not want to go to the army (mandatory in our country), breathe poisoned air or learn and work in places that look like prisons.

Our movement is among them. We think that it is more important to build alternative society right now than wait until communists give up power. Creation of alternative society seems easiest in culture since it doesn't need much of material means and may well exist in underground.

However, it is hard to break old scheme of Pole who is Catholic, fights for Polish police, Polish factory owner and Catholic mass on the radio instead of communist agitprop. It is easily seen in so called "independent culture" where artists opposed to government are doing same things as ever, but this time for different sponsor. Our movement is supporting all creative efforts that are independent from government, church and opposition.

We support literature, graphic arts, theatre, cabaret, happenings and amateur films. Exchange of ideas and independent information is also achieved by magazines, fliers, posters, murals and, most of all, by open debate clubs. All this helps in development of consciousness, in search for one's own way of life. We try to show that people divided by particular idea may unite in mutual interest and reach common goals—freedom, peace and justice.

To achieve these goals we are ready to cooperate with anyone (regardless of his opinions and ideas) who will recognize our right to be different and to live the way we want to live. There are examples of such cooperation with other groups, consisting mainly of young people: anti-government street demonstrations. Three of the biggest were on May 1, 1985 against price raises, Oct. 13, 1985 against mock elections to Sejm and June 12, 1987 during Pope's visit to Gdansk.

Finally, there is basic goal for today: to integrate people from counterculture with these from political opposition. Mutual distrust of artists for "dirty politicians" and the oppositions for "madmen and nihilists" narrows possibilities of our action.

That's about us. We would like to know what's happening in your country. We would like to get wider scope on problems of your society. Also, we would appreciate your help in making contacts with other anarchist groups in States and other countries.

RSA

Gdansk, Poland

Fifth Estate note: Please write letters as private persons writing to private persons or the letters will be checked by the Polish police.

The Gdansk chapter of the anti-war, ecology group, Freedom and Peace, by writing Krzysztof Galinski, ul. Kraszewskiego 37/34, 81-815 Sopot, Gdansk, Poland.

Dear Friends:

In the situation where mass media and all means of spreading information are strictly monopolized by the state, it becomes important to enliven the walls. Especially since the walls in our country are sad, gray and expressionless.

Our cities are dominated by Communist Party slogans. In order to oppose this we need spray paints in bright colours with which we can write on the walls slogans of freedom and peace.

Unfortunately, this kind of equipment is not available in Poland. This is why we would be extremely grateful for any kind of donation in the form of spray paints. If you want to contribute to the spreading of graffiti on Polish walls, then please send us as many cans as possible up to three in a parcel.

With Best Regards,

Krzysztof Galinski,

ul. Kraszewskiego 37/34,

81-815 Sopot, Gdansk,

Poland

fifth Estate

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