

---

## The Anarchist Group of Budapest History and two documents

---

the gravedigger of the present, for the present for him is but a gravestone. To be an anarchist means to be a man of culture. The anarchist movement is a cultural movement. The word anarchism is not a monopoly, it is used by many, and, hence, there are many who call themselves anarchists; but the true anarchist is the man of culture, the man of the future. Anarchist is he who in a progressive spirit says: I don't count our numbers; I confess and feel myself to be one; I don't seek to find out whether I am alone; I go my way like the eagle, lonely.

I cannot accept as an anarchist movement – I mean a truly anarchist one and not only one that calls itself so – any other than a cultural one. Yet no one should think that today's struggle is futile. The poor oppressed and neglected workingman is the foundation, the mainspring, and the motive force of the future-but only if we can lift him from the present and transplant him into the future. The task is not to incite hatred, to preach fighting, and to deepen antagonism, but to steel his will, to develop his spirit, to enhance his human dignity, and to raise up his morality. If he reaches these heights, no power will dare to oppose him. Thus will he become the bearer of culture – an anarchist. Awake proletarian – be human!

(*Társadalmi Forradalom* [Social Revolution], 5 July 1919.)



*Proletarian activists of the journal „Ma” in emigration  
Vienna, 1922*



Published by *Barricade Collective*  
2006, spring  
**e-mail:** [shmintaka@yahoo.com](mailto:shmintaka@yahoo.com)  
**website:** [barricade.neezyl.com](http://barricade.neezyl.com)

## The history and two documents of the Anarchist Group of Budapest

Some uncomprehending activists criticized us in not dealing more with the struggles and problems of the present. These critics probably don't recognize that we always write about our present - you're blind if you don't see and feel the invariance. A big part of the working-class movement which permanently grows richer in experiences, carries further yesterday's mistakes. As if the past century didn't/couldn't open our eyes! Invariance - for us, that means both the invariance of the unsolved problems and the invariance of our programme, because the task is given: we all want to destroy capitalism for the communist world society. A lot of activists think that there were fundamental changes in capitalism: they point at the information society, at the economic crises, at the accelerated rhythm of life, at post-modernism (as the perfection of the nihilism of bourgeois way of thinking), at the ecological crises, at the integrating force of capitalism and at a number of „new” problems which were produced by the capitalist world of the past period. Not independently from all these – our present task is the same as that of yesterday. Of course, we have to take into account the „miracles” of modernity and the time which more and more loudly resounds the final battle between barbarism and communism.

If we profoundly examine the present working-class movement, we see that it is a separated wreck drowning in ideological disputes – just like during the first world war and after the second world war. Some „anarchist groups” query the importance of organization – turning the problem into burlesque. A pestilential liberal epidemic makes them say that it is the rape of „personal freedom” when we're talking about centralization, about party, about the dictatorship of the proletariat, about red terror. These chattering so-called „anarchists” – who have never understood the significance of the dictatorship of the proletariat – still wear liberal clown clothes. They endlessly enumerate the bloody dates, imagine about burning towns and about hideous death. They are dying above the corpse of freedom (which in the reality is the freedom of the value's dictatorship), they throw the quotations of Marx and Bakunin one after the other, but they don't recognize that the dictatorship of the proletariat in its totality have never occurred in the whirling drift of the revolutions. They falsely identify the state capitalist terror with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Engels is wrong when he shouts out and calls the Paris Commune the dictatorship of the proletariat. He's wrong because there was only an effort to create it. Just as in 1919, during the Commune of Hungary. And the leadership of both maintained the system of wage labour, moreover, they supported, strengthened it with the slogans of self-management. That anarchist group which our story tells about usually also wasn't able to exceed those ideological obstacles which continue to

## Károly Krausz: Anarchy and Culture

The two words – anarchy and culture – in fact express the same thing: such a moral, mental, and economic condition of mankind that has never existed yet, but will and necessarily has to come about, for the direction of the laws of social development leads there.

Humans originate in the animal kingdom; ape, humanoid ape, apelike man developed from lower to higher forms, to humans. They left the animal world because they satisfied their needs not with teeth, horns, or nails, but with brains. The more they use their brains, the more human they are. Man is a social being, and the foundation, the guarantee of society's survival, is morality. Ethics is based on life. The better it assures the life of society's members the more it fulfills its task. These are experimental facts and theoretical truths. Thus, man is a social, therefore moral, being, and became that through his mental capacity. This road of development has led from animal existence through barbarism to civilization. Culture did not exist so far, except for a few individuals, for others there was only civilization, the training of the beast-man in order to make him human. There was no society, merely associations, interest groups which had and still have their own particular ethics, in continuous conflict devouring each other, in the past as cannibals, nowadays not corporally, as capitalists. Man, as a sensible creature, recognizes this situation and necessarily strives to make an end to it. This struggle is expressed in the program of anarchism; this is anarchism's fight. The rising of intellectual level, the awakening of self-knowledge and consciousness, the creation of culture lead from the human to the *Übermensch*, the god-man or, simply, the cultured man. To my mind, this is the present task of anarchism: to achieve freedom. But freedom presupposes equality, and equality is not possible without brotherhood. Or in other words: from „autonomous personality” through „autonomous community” to federative union of nations. That all those distinctions which cause hatred have to be abolished is as clear as any mathematical formula: national dividers, such as „French-German”; religious ones, such as „Jew-Christian”, economic ones, such as „bourgeois-proletarian” – all have to be removed in order; for man to resurrect himself.

The anarchist has dispensed with all prejudice, eliminated all dividing walls, he knows of nothing else but what Zarathustra searched for: the man of the future. The anarchist is the prophet, the harbinger, the man of the future: a man of culture who creates culture. The present is his past. He cannot be even

sustained by coercion, such as the state, the fatherland, religion, church, pseudo-morality and capital.

7

In economic terms we wish to accomplish not state socialism which paralyzes individuality but the free and brotherly association of workers both in subjective and objective terms, with the exclusion of all external domination, that is, complete and unconditional freedom in political and economic respects alike.

8

Anarchists regard the one-sidedness of education as one of the major wellsprings of the faults of present-day society. Therefore, they wish to make men more conscious and educate them for a dominion-free society.

9

Anarchism will enhance all that which is inherently good in men. The society in which poverty, ignorance, bad examples, hatred, and daily struggle for bread forces men to crime will be replaced by one in which love and mutual assistance will dominate as natural laws.

10

Anarchism fights for the common interests of mankind. Everyone is welcome to join who does not wish to be an authority or power and does not wish to be dominated by others.

These are the main points which constitute the *first steps* towards a mentally developed man, in order to separate from the old man all that is animal-like in him.

If that occurs, mankind will soon reach its final aim, for after thousands of years of suffering and quest it will have found itself.

(Published as an appendix to: E. Reclus, *Anarchy*, Budapest 1919, pp. 23-24.)

dominate the libertarian movements until now. It seems that the Alice-tale of Lewis Carroll steps on the scene of reality. „In the house of the Hatmaker there's always five p. m.: the time of drinking tea. So, the cups continuously empty-fill.” The „winds of invariance” continue to blow, but this invariant theory and praxis have thousand times squealed about itself, about its haughty moralism, about its organizational absurdity. If that's all we wouldn't consider it necessary to write about the anarchist group in question, but during the Soviet Republic of Hungary for some moments they managed to step beyond their notion (which reminds of some archeological relics) and to act as a real proletarian force (though merging in a larger tendency) against the expropriators of the revolution: the social democratic-bolshevik government.

The activists of the Anarchist Group of Budapest – which was called at the beginning the „Budapest Group of Revolutionary Socialists” – went through the schools of the movement, their journal called *Társadalmi Forradalom (Social Revolution)* was established in 1907 by the anarcho-communist Ervin Batthyány, who was closer to the anarcho-Marxists William Morris and Ervin Szabó than the group. Getting bored with the lukewarm „moralizing anarchist” atmosphere, he had „pedaled” further to London, where his powerlessness became complete and his movement activity vanished into thin air. *Társadalmi Forradalom* followed in the footsteps of Kropotkin, Malatesta and the French syndicalists, their main topics were attacks against social democracy and anti-militarism. At the beginning, they cooperated with the Russian emigration living in Budapest, but the latter was more interested in the propaganda of act than in the theoretical and practical strengthening of the group – so their ways separated. In the focus of the Budapest anarchists' efforts were anti-parlamentarism, anti-militarism, direct actions and the practical questions of the general strike, but the activists didn't have a common opinion. It's a question whether a group which hasn't elaborated his platform can be considered as serious. In his autobiography, Lajos Kassák writes about one of the founders of the group, Károly Krausz: „At Sunday mornings, a couple of us used to meet with uncle Krausz in a pub, and in such cases the old man made real lectures. He was a man with large knowledge, he had read a lot of German books from sociologists, philosophers and also poets. From him I heard for the first time about Goethe's Faust, about Schiller's dramas, but the old man liked to talk above all about Kropotkin's anarchist ethics. He comprehensibly explained the meanings of the words 'collectivism' and 'individualism', then he coupled Stirner's individualism with Marx' communism, and revealed the socio-theoretical differences between historical materialism and the Christian religion.” Krausz had a background in the circle of the left-wing religion philosopher Jenő Henrik Schmitt, and being a „moderate activist” who dealt with the question of moral too much, he often became a mere pub-table theoretician. He was poisoned by

the cult of Nietzsche and Tolstoy which was wide-spread at the beginning of the century. The Krausz fraction of the Budapest Group of Revolutionary Socialists took over the edition of Társadalmi Forradalom after 1908. Earlier Batthyány had called Krausz and his circle moderate.

This current was more prudent, moralist and theoretical than the actionist tendency within the group, which wanted to establish syndicalist groups which could federate in the future. A split took place in 1910, the syndicalists (together with Ervin Szabó, who have joined them in the meantime) published their manifesto, which is much more ripe as the views of Krausz's group, taking into account its critical perspicacity and its emphasizing of the importance of organization. (We will publish the manifesto in a future broshure.) The company of Krausz got stuck into the false slough of intellectual education, and – in spite of attacking social democracy – they too outlined the programme of instructing the workers: „We have to instruct the workers how to begin the struggle against dogma, authority, state and every centralized power. That means nothing else than the raising of the banner of anarchy.”

This odd clichés, stuffy slogans always return as some ghosts, and are dancing around the fractions of the working class even today. Decades later, Ken Knabb will demonstrate for the Tokyo group „Libertaire” its own conservatism: „Contrary to your suggestion that while other anarchists perhaps had many of the faults that I criticized, you ‘Japanese anarchists’ were somehow different, I must say that you are unfortunately quite typical, in no way different from anarchists in other countries.” – says cinically the critic. „You rummage among the corpses of Proudhon, the male-chauvinist ideologue of small cooperative capitalism; of ‘our Bakunin’, the proto-bolshevik; of World War I supporter Kropotkin; of the state-collaborating Spanish CNT (now once again trying to bureaucratically ‘organize’ the struggles of the radical Spanish proletariat); and of various old oriental imitators thereof. You want to construct a mythical history for yourselves because you don’t know how to make real history now.” That’s why we wrote about invariance in the beginning of our introduction. According to our conviction, the programme of the proletariat is invariant, but every idea, point of view, programme, which was proved to be false by the historical experiences, must be thrown out from the steamship of the present. Invariance is also many-sided, some groups consisting of working-class members weaken our struggle and send it back to a former stage of development which was already superseded by capitalism. But the insights of the former movement hadn’t become a total practical force of anarcho-communism. The mere anti-etatism in itself (which does not take into account that the domination of capital stands higher than the states), the confusing of the bourgeois centralism with the organical centralization of the proletariat, the division of the struggle to economic and political terrains,

Budapest Anarchist Group:  
**Summary of the World-view of the Anarchists in Hungary**

1

The capitalist social order was based on the exploitation of labour, its survival was only in the interest of the capitalist exploiters and their satellites. The present form of social coexistence, the state, only increased the great existing inequalities of wealth; its militarism and system of justice took the life of the best and most independent proletarians.

2

Anarchism wants to achieve the end of class, domination and exploitation and to build a social order free of domination, based on the self-governing community.

3

Anarchists are for permanent development and do not postulate a set program but fight incessantly for the achievement of anarchist society.

4

The anarchists wish to reach a new morality by the unity of individual development with the sense of human cooperation.

They desire the freedom of the individual as long as it does not infringe upon the freedom of others.

5

During the building of socialist society they intend to organize society and labour in a free manner. They demand from every government the assurance of free agitation.

6

They fight against all social formations and institutions

9

not possible to get a clear picture: Korvin and Szamuely – both were involved in the „conspiracy” – remained untouched, while two „left-wing communists” from the Ukraine were killed and many others had to flee. A lot of points of the story are foggy, but we won't write about these now. It's a fact that the insurgents, the vanguard of the revolution which was hardened by the former proletarian struggles, wanted to get square with the whole Soviet government, they prepared to liquidate its clearly social-democratic part and push the company of Kun to periphery. (Why not to liquidate Kun, too? The source of their naivety: they considered that Kun is not a hangman but a „victim”.) Stepping on the road of the consequent proletarian dictatorship, they wanted to continue the war against the camp of counter-revolution whether it calls itself white or red. We won't foreshadow what would happen if the anarcho-communist revolution broke out. The revolutionaries were few in number, but a lot of the members of the working class watched the leaders of the Soviet Republic with dissatisfaction and felt directly that between the old and the „new” order there isn't a big difference for them – they were exploited just like before. Not long after, the white terror of Horthy apparently plunged the revolutionary elements and the counter-revolutionary leftists in the same camp. The Soviet Republic collapsed. Kun and his friends left Korvin in Hungary with the task of re-organization of the party. Korvin was humpbacked and his activity during the revolution was widely-known. This way Kun settled the bill with him. Korvin couldn't supersede his former mistakes, his unusual inconsistency, romanticism and naivety deluded him. Szamuely was captured on the border, the Lenin Guys were massacred, some communists continued to fight in Russia and in other places. The bolshevik career of Kun (and his comrades-in-arms) lasted until the Thermidor of Stalin, then he became an obstacle for the system for which he eagerly worked throughout his life. The social democrats merrily continued their proletarian-killer activity.

The history of the Anarchist Group of Budapest in fact ended with the formation of the Anarchist Union. We tried to treat this „little intermezzo” and the group's contradictory activity (in which the negative elements dominated) in this text. The revolutionary wave lifted it up – the group moved towards revolutionary activity and got out from the myth of individualism. The tone of their articles is cautious, but in practice (in spite of their tactician attempts) they tried to establish the proletarian unity, and – instead of the „theoretical pseudo-dictatorship of the proletariat” (about which they wrote, too) – they moved towards the real dictatorship of the proletariat – querying that ideology which was earlier propagated by them.

*Barricade Collective*  
Spring of 2006

the enlargement of the externally „brought-in” and „learned” class consciousness, and also the ouvrierism and other „infantile disorders” – all these are fillips to the organical development of the movement. Marx's critique of the „left-wing liberalism” (Proudhon, Stirner) and the consequent anarcho-communist movement's historical line of development can also be understood as a general criticism of „revolutionary egoism” – but it has no effect in some „anarchist circles”. Although the proletarian struggles confirmed the correctness of the former critiques and these always became an effective force of the class-struggle avant-garde – it was not the case in the whole movement. The movement of the proletariat is divided, and capitalism benefits from this division.

„Anarchy and Culture”, the text of Károly Krausz which is published below, justifies our criticism. This text is far from reaching the level of that period's class-struggle literature. It is much more similar to a prophetic revelation from the beginning of the 20. century, as to a manifesto from a revolutionary epoch. The summary of the world-view of the group, also published below, is a reflection of the old ideas. They reject the consistent program of the proletariat (3rd point). In the 4th point we can see the formerly mentioned cult of personality. The whole text is a totally liberal manifestation. It is absolutely wrong. Obviously, the question is not, what a group considers itself to be, and also not the class position of its members (usually it is clear). The real question: does its activity hinder the development of the movement or does it give impulse to this development? In order to answer to this question (concerning this specific group), we must go beyond the studying of their texts and point out, that they managed to do progressive activity, getting out from their „drowsy literary dead-ends”. (We mention, that they had also written better writings than those below.)

„The present communism is nothing else than terrorist social-democracy, and they have only tactical differences with the ordinary social-democracy” – wrote the comrades of the anarchist Társadalmi Forradalom at 22nd of April, 1919. Their activity was pushed to the periphery, but they continuously attacked the Soviet government which obviously couldn't bear the criticism of the revolutionaries. Since they called that government to account about the consequent proletarian dictatorship, which was the executive organ of the professional worker-leaders, and which was amalgamated in a process of compromises and vile tactics. In the 15th of April issue of its newspaper, the Anarchist Group of Budapest greeted the government with restraint – they took the false position of „critical support”. After that, the members of the group tasted very quickly the poisoned wine of the bolshevik-social democratic pact – a sign of that is the above quoted statement. At first they were optimistic and co-operated with the Soviet government – but they urged the proletariat to be vigilant towards the power. In the 15th of April issue of Társadalmi Forradalom, they publish an

article entitled „The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat”, in which they explain that „under the dictatorship, all the human rights of freedom are suspended, but we believe that this deprivation of rights does not apply to the parties of the proletariat”. The writing separates the party from the revolutionary masses and arrives to the social-democratic proposition of „let us explain to the workers, that the road towards the future goes through the revolutionary dictatorship” – that means, that the party must put the proletariat wise and bring (or beat) the class consciousness into the heads. This statement is so revealing, that it makes absolutely clear, why the group of Krausz was open towards the Soviet government – their basic ideas had a social-democratic basis. It’s a fact that the article also warns, that the dictatorship of the proletariat must ruthlessly be used against the capitalists. It’s a nice platitude, but it also tells a lot, that they accepted the self-styled dictatorship of the proletariat merely because of tactical reasons – which in reality was an attempt of the social democratic-bolshevik party, above the proletariat. But the collaboration of this group didn’t last for long. The reasons for this: the government exiled these so-called anarchist cells to the periphery; it made impossible the functioning of other collaborating tendencies which gave critical support (as the journal of Kassák); and it was also important, that in spite of its partial support, the Anarchist Group of Budapest didn’t turn into a bureaucratic cogwheel of the government’s machinery. For some time, they remained proclimators of the human rights of freedom in a Tolstoyan-Kropotkinian spirit, who uninterruptedly emphasized the importance of „the education to consciousness and the free economical co-operation based on personal freedom”. They played a role of a supervisor who checked whether the government had fulfilled its promises. They fought for democratic rights, they stood for separate interests, and it was more important for them to gain the rights of liberty as the liquidation of the bourgeois dictatorship.

When Ottó Korvin, with a quite consequent movementary past behind him, became the leader of the political police at the time of the forming of the Soviet government – he left his former intransigent position, he decided to participate in the power of the government (which was far not exclusively directed against the bourgeoisie), although he had opposed the fusion of the „communist” and the social democratic party. It’s possible that he didn’t recognize the counter-revolutionary nature of the Governing Council – but in this case, why he supported (because he supported!) the class-struggle resistance against it? He helped to regenerate the anarchist movement when the Andrassy palace was requisited for the anarchists, he gave financial support to Társadalmi Forradalom, he released the communist Kogan and the anarchist Bojtor who had been arrested by the company of Kun.



*Ottó Korvin*

In April, at the time of the elections of the workers’ and soldiers’ deputies, the anarchists and syndicalists won a majority in the council of Budapest’s VIIIth district. The Governing Council couldn’t let this and annulled the result of the elections. After this, a lot of members left the ruling party and – co-operating with the group around Krausz – established the Anarchist Union. They organized discussion circles, tried to enlarge the social basis of the revolution. Those „left-wing communists” who had remained in the party, were travellers of two ships at the same time: they tried to do harm to the social-democratic line „from within” and overcome it, and on the other hand, they supported the proletarian forces outside the party – instead of breaking with the Soviet government without hesitation. We told the story of this in another publication (*Self-organizing Proletariat in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy 1918-19*), so we only mention it here. The „left-wing communists” inside the party and the anarchists outside of it found each other, but their relationships were far not unproblematic because the „damage-makers from within” and the attackers from outside were not on the same platform. Afterwards, they were pushed to a common platform – by the reality. The class struggle elements organized an uprising at July, but the plan became public. From the sources accessible today it’s