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How I Became an Anarchist

A. Neselbergs

17th December 1931

I was born in the year 1909 in Riga, the Capital of Latvia (then a province of Russia). My parents were workers. I passed most of my youth in Riga. In this city I also lived through many difficulties caused by the World War. During the Revolution I saw, the people fraternising with the soldiers and overturned the Tsars power. I will always remember those days when the people ruled themselves. I also remember the arrival of the Whites (Nationalists/Monarchists) their shameful power and butchery of thousands of workers. From these days though still a child I became an opponent of their religious dogma and an atheist. Because of the poor living conditions in the city my parents left for the countryside, settling in the provinces. My father hired himself out as farm labourer and I was employed as a Sheppard.

Working from sun up to sun down, seeing the lifestyle of our master I began to understand the difference between him and me, between exploiter and exploited. From that time I supported all kinds of workers party. Later I moved to the city of Jelgava and actively took part in the Socialist Youth Sports movement (in 1927).

After a short time I began to see that although the leaders in party offices talked about mass demonstrations and revolutionary

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Retrieved on 4th February 2021 from libcom.org
Published in the Sennaciulo on the 17th of December 1931.

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acts, but during membership meetings took steps to collaborate with the bourgeoisie and state officials. I began to lose faith in them. But after the failure of an anti Fascist uprising, Lithuanian political exiles gathered in Poland, I became linked with them and illegally crossed the Poland-Latvia border to fight Lithuanian Fascists (in 1927).¹

In 1928 I crossed the Lithuanian border carrying anti-Fascist literature and was arrested. As a result I was condemned to fifteen years in prison. While a prisoner I began learning Esperanto and received my first information about Anarchism via SAT.² After 30 months I received an amnesty and returned to Latvia. Now I was regarded as a suspect person. Three times I was arrested, and then released. After my return I was elected to the committee of the Latvian Sport Self Defence Association (Social Democratic) of Jelgava. I took with me the strength of class struggle consciousness and broke up the compromise policy, in response the central committee wanted me expelled. But the membership opposed that measure and the leadership did not succeed.

Later I drifted little by little away from the social democrats. En some old Esperanto newspaper I discovered the address of the Anarchist International Youth organisation. I immediately joined it and subscribed to its information service. Later I subscribed to the Libera Laboristo (Free Worker) the organ of the Ligo of Esperantistaj Senŝtatanoj (League of Esperanto speakers without a state). In August this year I joint SAT and subscribed to there [rest of sentence is missing in original]. Thanks to Esperanto I have relations

¹ In 1926 there was a coup that toppled the elected government and replaced it with the right wing Lithuanian Nationalist Union. Afterwards the regime faced sporadic uprisings and resistance for several years. Referring the Nationalist Union as Fascist today is considered rather controversial, as differences with Mussolini's Italy aside, the charge of Fascism was the justification used by the Soviet Union to conquer and occupy Lithuania in 1940.

² The Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (World Non-national Association) a world wide assocaiton of Esperanto speakers active in the Labour movement. Still active today. satesperanto.org

with comrades in several different countries and Esperanto helped me find the life goal of Anarchy.