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Obituary: Georgi Grigoriev (Balkanski) (1906–1996)

Anarchist Communist Federation

1997

The veteran Bulgarian anarchist Georgi Grigoriev has died at the age of 90 in Sofia. He began to call himself an anarchist from the age of 14, and a year later joined the Anarchist Communist Federation of Bulgaria (FACB) which had been founded in 1919. Emerging from semi-clandestinity, the anarchist movement began to develop among both urban and rural workers and among both youth and intellectuals..

Georgi himself narrowly escaped a murder bid by a Royalist gang in 1925, and was forced to take refuge in Czechoslovakia. He then became an agronomics student in France. Here he joined a large number of Bulgarian anarchists, who had fled via Yugoslavia and Austria. Most of the group settled in Toulouse and this 35-strong group, of which Georgi, under the name of Hadjiev, was a member in conjunction with comrades in Paris and Beziers, carried out an important work of political elaboration and the drafting of a programme for the FACB. They also set up an Aid Committee for anarchist prisoners in Bulgaria. Returning to Bulgaria after an amnesty in 1930, Grigoriev and the others organised an un-

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derground group in Sofia. The work of agitation culminated in the clandestine national conference of the FACB in 1932, held in the forest, near Lovech. The protection of the conference was assured by a group under the supervision of the electro-engineer Boris Yanev, who from the boughs of a huge tree, was in communication with sentries posted all around. The ninety delegates themselves had arrived at Lovech as delegates to a teetotallers conference, which had allowed them a 50% reduction in travel costs! Grigoriev himself chaired the conference. The conference was a major step in the reconstitution of the FACB. But in 1934, the military re-established its grip. Once more, Grigoriev fled to France.

On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and revolution, the Bulgarian anarchist movement both in exile and underground in Bulgaria, gave their support to the Spanish anarchists. 30 militants managed to defy the pact of non-intervention and entered Spain, either by boat or over the Pyrenees. Grigoriev himself was present as delegate of the FACB at the joint conference of the CNT anarcho-syndicalist union and the specific anarchist organisation, the FAI, in November 1936.

Returning to Bulgaria Grigoriev was arrested in 1939, spending time in prison and then concentration camp until liberation on 19 September 1944. The FACB began to re-organise, but there was only a year's grace before the Communists clamped down on them. At least a thousand militants were put in concentration camps, some for many years. Grigoriev evaded capture, fleeing to France once more. Here under the pseudonym of Balkanski he took an active part in the exile organisation, the Bulgarian Anarchist Union, as well as participating in anarchist activities in France. He published two books in French, a *History of the Anarchist Movement in Bulgaria* and *National Liberation and Social Revolution*. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Grigoriev returned to Bulgaria, where he was reunited with the family that he had not seen for 40 years. He took an active part in the resurgence of the Bulgarian movement

and above all in the founding of the Bulgarian Anarchist Federation.