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# The Anarchist underground in the Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s

Outlines of history

Anatoly Dubovik

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Translated by Szarapow. (Translator's note: all of people's and most placenames are transcribed from Russian, so there may be some differences if referred against the Ukrainian or Yiddish version; but since Kharkov, Huliaipole or Odessa have been largely Russian-speaking cities that should hardly be a problem).

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The period after the end of the Russian Civil War is still largely a blank space in the history of socialist movements that were opposed to the Bolshevik regime. Apparently, such a situation is due to an extremely poor number of sources available for studies: huge (we have no doubts about that) numbers of archive cases that are held by the heirs of OGPU-NKVD are barely accessible to any relatively large number of historians; the émigré sources (periodicals, memoirs, personal correspondence etc.) are also given insufficient scientific circulation.

The studies in the history of the anarchist movement are no exception in this sense. Only very recently has it become clear that the Soviet and foreign historians' notions of the anarchists in the USSR after 1921 cannot be reduced to the dark picture of a movement dying and fading away which was painted in 1960-1980s by the likes of S. Kanev and V. Komin in the USSR and P. Avrigh in the USA. In fact the anarchists continued their

activities throughout 1920s and even into the 1930s, and in this writer's view, this movement was sometimes even more sizeable than the anarchism of some earlier periods, e.g. of the time between the 1905 and 1917 revolutions.

A creation of the true history of the anti-Bolshevik socialist movement in the USSR is a project for the future. In this article we will attempt to make the most basic rough draft, preliminary outline, contours of the history of anarchism in the Soviet Ukraine – the outlines that will, in the future, certainly be filled in by more detailed and precise research.

In the view of the average person and even of some historians, anarchism in the Ukraine during the Civil War means first and foremost the Makhnovist movement. Such a view is generally incorrect but we shall start our overview with the Makhnovshchina. It will be all the more interesting considering that it is thought the “anarcho-makhnovist” insurgent movement ceased to exist from the moment Nestor Makhno himself fled from the Ukraine to Romania – immediately, or perhaps within the next few months.

In reality, in 1922 and 1923 in the Left-bank, South and East Ukraine independent Makhnovist detachments and underground groups kept operating. The scope and results of their activities are naturally incomparable with what was happening in 1921, and the summaries of the banditry-fighting organs most often mention defeats and liquidations of the Makhnovists. For example, in January 1922 the Destructive detachment of the Bogucharsky regiment as a result of two battles in Starobelsky uyezd [district] defeated the Zaitsev insurgent detachment (over 70 fighters); Zaitsev himself was killed. That same month in the village of Vozvizhenka in Gulyaypolsky uyezd an underground Makhnovist group numbering 11 people was arrested, and its leader Kulinichenko was killed during an escape attempt. In February in Krivorozhsky uyezd the Ivanov insurgent group was destroyed (120 people),

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RPAU Artillery, Dmitriy Sipliviy, were sentenced to be shot by the UNKVD Troika for the Zaporozhye region.

We will probably never know whether these cases were completely invented by the investigators or there were some actual facts of clandestine activity...

#### Endnote

Polonskiy Yevgeniy (?-02.12.1919)

Son of a fisherman in Berdiansk. Black Sea Fleet sailor. Member of Left SRs party (1917–1918), Communist Party (Bolshevik) from Spring 1918. In February – April 1918 worked as a member of Huliai-Polye revolutionary committee (Gulyay-Polskiy Revkom), commander of “Free Battalion” (“Volniy Batalyon”). Member of the Makhnovist movement from Autumn 1918, regiment commander. In Spring 1919 switched sides to RKKA (Workers & Peasants Red Army). In August 1919 joined the Makhnovshchina again, approved as a commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Crimean regiment of the RPAU. Joined the underground Bolshevik revolutionary committee which acted on the territory taken by the Makhnovists and prepared for assassinations of Makhno and other leaders of the insurgency at its order. Was uncovered by the Makhnovist counter-intelligence, arrested and shot on December 2, 1919 in Ekaterinoslav.

(From [www.makhno.ru](http://www.makhno.ru), compiled by A. Dubovik, A. Belash)

#### Sources:

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in Poltava region the Lontsov detachment surrendered (200 people). In March in Gulyaypolsky uyezd an insurgent detachment that consisted of 134 previously pardoned Makhnovists was defeated and destroyed, and in a battle in early May the Boiko insurgent detachment was defeated.

Nevertheless, there were more than just defeats in the Makhnovist insurgency of this period. In the spring of 1922 the Danilov insurgent detachment undertook a series of attacks and train robberies on the railroad section between Pologi and Chaplino stations. In Volhynia a mounted group of Makhnovists was making raids; its 30 to 50 members, according to the Soviet intelligence sources, came to the Ukraine from Romania. Alongside more or less active guerrilla operations, raids and leaflet distribution, there were even cases of new detachments forming, for example, in Genichesky uyezd where in April 1922 a new Makhnovist detachment formed, numbering 32 people and headed by the former chief of the uyezd militia.

Quite a number of such facts could be listed. But the matter now is not the number of such facts and their scrupulous listing. The most important thing is that “Makhnovshchina after Makhno” is a historical reality that demands to be studied.

Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that the question of when the Makhnovist insurgency ended is yet to be closed because the documents that are in circulation among historians do not provide a definite answer. For example, the summary of the Intelligence department of the armed forces of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR), dated July 14, 1922, mentions that in the territory of Donetsk, Ekaterinoslav, Zaporozhye and Chernigov provinces “gangs aren’t present” – while in March 1923 only in the territory of Melitopolsky uyezd there are reports of three acting Makhnovist detachments (led by Krivorotko, Kozakov and Kizilov), numbering a total of over 30 people.

Here's another example. The instruction of the Permanent council on the struggle against banditry of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the UkrSSR, dated December 14, 1922, remarks on the degeneration of political banditry into criminality. – But half a year later, on May 23, 1923, the instruction of the Commander of the troops of the Ukrainian military district and the GPU says that “many kulak gangs are acting in the guise of criminal ones.” – I.e. we can see that not only the presence of the political “kulak gangs” is noted, but also their numbers.

In December 1924 the GPU of the UkrSSR, fulfilling a request from the All-Union Council of People's Commissars, made a decision “to smash the remains of the guerrilla-bandit groups” during the following year. In order to achieve that in several districts GPU banditry-fighting shock groups had to be organised. They were obliged to compile by January 1925 operative plans on the liquidation of gangs and to have exact information as to their connections, bases, numbers and armaments.

However, by mid-1920s the Makhnovist insurgency was actually but a “remainder” of the previous mass movement, dying under the strikes of the punitive expeditions and decomposing in the situation of isolation into ever-smaller detachments and gangs. As opposed to this, the purely anarchist movement, which mostly covered the cities, gained new strength in that period. We shall move on to its history.

Judging by the materials available today, 1922 was the last year of legal practical activity of Russian and Ukrainian anarcho-syndicalists – practical in the syndicalist understanding of the word, i.e. as part of the organised workers' movement, in union and factory structures.

For example, in early 1922 the Ekaterinoslav anarcho-syndicalists were still on the board of administration of the city Food workers' union but in late March they were “removed” after a decision of the provincial Union congress.

By 1937 the vast majority of the Ukrainian anarchists were outside the republic – in prison camps and political isolators, or exiled in Siberia, the Far North or Middle Asia. The bacchanal of terror in UkrSSR had taken the form of a fight against the “right-wing and Trotskyite conspirators” or “bourgeois nationalists,” and according to the UkrSSR NKVD data, in all of 1937 there were just 23 anarchists arrested throughout the Ukraine. The case of a fifteen-strong group in Nikolaev region stands out – perhaps it really did exist. The remainder are the mostly solitary old anarchists who weren't previously arrested by some miracle. They lived in Donetsk region (two people, including anarcho-Makhnovist Ivan Lepetchenko), in Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, Kiev region (one person each), and perhaps as a curiosity three of the chief UkrSSR NKVD workers.

Finally, in mid-February 1938 in Huliaipole and Dnepropetrovsk over thirty active ex-Makhnovists were arrested and accused of belonging to the illegal organisation – the Huliaipole Military-Makhnovist Counterrevolutionary Insurgent Regiment (Gulyay-Polskiy Vovenno-Makhnovskiy Kontrrevolyutsionniy Povstancheskiy Polk). Among the other charges were connections to the Ukrainian nationalist centre in Kiev, the foreign Makhnovist centre in Bucharest and Central anarchist group in Moscow, armed struggle against the Soviet authorities, preparations for a rising, anti-Soviet agitation, working on terror and sabotage. The arrestees included the Sharovskiy brothers (who were accused of leading the “regiment”), Konstantin Chuprina and Nazar Zuichenko. All of them were sentenced to death by the firing squad by a decision of the UNKVD Troika for the Dnepropetrovsk region, dated April 25, 1938.

A similar case cropped up at the Zelyoniy Gai khutor in Zaporozhye region where 22 ex-Makhnovists were arrested. Seven of them, including the former deputy commander of the

That led to his arrest on December 5, 1932. He was soon sentenced to 3 years in a prison camp.

Also in 1932 an anarcho-syndicalist circle in Cherkassy was arrested. It was organised by young worker Dmitriy Ablamskiy. The circle was distributing anti-Soviet leaflets. The leader was sentenced to 5 years in a prison camp.

The well-known old Petrograd anarcho-syndicalists Pyotr Gerasimchuk and his wife Lidiya Aksyonova settled in Simferopol after having been freed from internal exile. In 1933 and 1934 they made attempts at underground work. They conducted secret correspondence with the Moscow anarchists and discussed the perspectives of renewal of the anarchist movement in the USSR. After evaluating these perspectives as absolutely non-existent due to the police terror the spouses decided to escape abroad from the Soviet Union but they were arrested in early November 1934 as they prepared their escape. During the investigation they were accused not just of anti-Soviet but also of terrorist activity due to which they were both sentenced to the 5 years' imprisonment at the Solovki camp, unusually harsh punishment for the period.

Kharkov anarchists planned to hold a congress of Ukrainian Nabat groups and to reform the KAU. But once again the GPU forestalled them: on February 1, 1934, there were simultaneous arrests of interconnected anarchist groups and circles in Kharkov, Orel, Voronezh and Bryansk. In Kharkov several dozen people were arrested and two working artels of anarchists were liquidated. However, the evidence probably wasn't sufficient and so the punitive organs decided to exile eight of the group leaders, while the rest were freed under surveillance.

Of course, they didn't stay free for long. Already in 1935 Kharkov was "cleared" from anarchists who were arrested and sent into exile one after another. It was probably that year when the collection of money for the Black Cross and passing it to the exiled comrades finally ceased.

Until the Autumn of 1922 anarcho-syndicalists were members of administrative organs of local coal miners' unions and mine committees in a number of towns and villages of Donbas – where the ideas and organisational principles of the American syndicalist organisation Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) started to spread in Summer 1917. Among these towns were Yuzovo (Donetsk), Lugansk, Gorlovka etc.

In 1922 anarchists (probably not just syndicalists) were active (legally or otherwise) in other cities and regions of the Ukraine – Kiev, Odessa, Poltava, Sevastopol, Elisavetgrad, Nikolaev etc. But Kharkov remained the most important centre of the Ukrainian anarchist movement of the early 1920s, much like during the civil war.

Despite the mass arrests in November and December 1922 – which were undertaken by the GPU throughout the USSR, targeted anarchists and socialists and actually liquidated the anarchist organizations that hitherto survived, e.g. the All-Russian Section of Anarcho-Universalists (Vserossiyskaya Sektsiya Anarkho-Universalistov) – the Kharkov anarchists already managed to restart their work in 1923.

In the beginning of the year several Kharkov-based anarchist circles re-established the city-wide organisation on the former programme of the Nabat Confederation of Anarchists of the Ukraine (Konfederatsiya Anarkhistov Ukrainy "Nabat", KAU Nabat). Anarchists were active at a number of large industrial works, foremost of which were the steam-locomotive-building works, railroad depot and VEK factory; among other things, they were taking part in union activity. At the Technology institute a student group was organised; it was headed by Alexander Volodarskiy, recently pardoned from the condemned cell, and the young anarchist Boris Nemiretskiy who was also involved in the clandestine activities among the Central Archives employees of which he was one. The old anarchist Avenir Uryadov who was condemned to hard labour back in the Tsarist times and just freed after a three-year stint

at the Bolshevik political isolator got a job as a tram-driver and started an active propaganda and agitation campaign among the industrial and office workers of the Kharkov tram depot. Among the handicraftsmen who were forced by the Soviets to unite in artels the work was undertaken by old anarchists Pyotr Zakharov who was a board member of the producers' co-operative and Grigoriy Tsesnik.

In 1923 and 1924 the Kharkov members of Nabat were successfully conducting anarchist propaganda among the various aforementioned categories of workers and attracted both young people and older proletarians to their cause. The group was publishing duplicated leaflets and intended to organise an underground printing shop. In order to facilitate that the former leader of the Elisavetgrad anarchist youth group Iuda Reidman got a job at a printing-house but he couldn't fulfill his task of obtaining the type.

The Kharkov group included not just veterans of the movement who had experienced the Tsarist prisons and the troubles of the Civil War – it was reinforced by the new generation of anarchists. For example, the accountant-economist of the Kharkov liqueur and vodka factory Grigoriy Diyakov joined the group in 1923, aged 20; he was arrested in March 1925 for his belonging to the “anarchist underground.”

The Kharkov group was connected to the anarchist underground in a number of other cities (Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Nikolaev, Donbas etc.) and also, it has to be added, with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and Maximalists. The connection with the SRs was maintained via the well-known Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party activist Vladimir Trutovskiy who was exiled in Poltava in 1925–1926 and led the clandestine activities of the Ukrainian Left SRs. Much like many of his fellow party members, he was quite definitely drifting in the direction of anarcho-syndicalism – he recognized “the stateless federation of producers and consumers” as the ideal of Left SRs.

Throughout 1930 and 1931 the Kharkov group re-established connections with anarchists in Moscow and Ukrainian cities. They included:

- Elisavetgrad – a group of anarcho-syndicalists formed by “Vanya Chorniy” and other Nikolaev natives who were just freed from internal exile and settlement in Nikolaev;
- Dnepropetrovsk – a group was revived after 1928 by the steam train engine-driver Leonid Lebedev who was wounded in 1923 during the infamous shooting in Solovki; the group he led attempted to once again initiate worker strikes;
- Simferopol where the freed from exile Boris and Lyubov Nemiretskiy settled; they were active anarchists in the early 1920s;
- Kiev where another former exile, Boris Lipovetskiy, returned in 1930;
- and also Voronezh, Bryansk and Orel where Ukrainian Nabat anarchists ended up when they were exiled or limited in their choice of place of residence; one of those was the KAU leader and ideologist of many years, Aron Baron.

Probably unconnected to the Nabat network were relatively small anarchist groups elsewhere in the Ukraine that weren't mentioned in Belash's testimony. Their existence was established from archive materials and other sources.

In 1930 the anarchist activity of Igor Breshkov, 17 years old metallurgist worker from Zaporozhye, started. He got introduced to anarchism via a Moscow anarcho-mystic of the same age, Iosif Ioffe. In 1930–1932 Breshkov was receiving illegal anarchist literature from Moscow and attempted to distribute it.

re-established connections with the anarchist émigrés and set up regular smuggling of the Paris-based *Dielo Truda* magazine into the USSR. It is worth noting that Skitalets was involved in exactly the same sort of activity 18 years previously when he was one of the leaders in the Union of Black Sea Fleet Sailors (Soyuz Chernomorskikh Moryakov). Towards the end of 1929 the Union of Anarchist Workers was smashed by the NKVD, and it should be assumed that its Black Sea branch met the same fate.

Meanwhile, in 1930 the anarchist activities in Kharkov experienced a new upsurge. It was mainly thanks to the return of many previously arrested activists whose exile terms had ended. At the initiative of Pyotr Zakharov, the Kharkov anarchists once again united in an organisation with the Nabat programme and name. It included Grigoriy Tsesnik, Avenir Uryadov, Reveka Yaroshevskaya (who belonged to the Belostok anarchist group back in 1903) and other experienced underground workers, propagandists and organisers.

According to Belash, in the early 1930s the Kharkov anarchists were most interested and stirred up by the problems of collectivization and the famine that followed. In relation to that they had discussed the perspectives of setting up a mass underground press the use of which was supposed to facilitate the mass resistance to the literally cannibalistic policies of the authorities. But money was needed in order to create an underground printing shop, and they didn't have any. Grigoriy Tsesnik, appealing to the pre-revolutionary experience (including his own) proposed to undertake a robbery ("expropriation") of a bank but he didn't get support. A meeting of the Kharkov Nabat members decided to gather the money needed for setting up a printing shop from the work of their ceramics-making artel and of the commune of old anarchists and SRs (members of the All-Union society of political convicts and exiles) in the Meref settlement near Kharkov.

Ukrainian anarchists were active even in small provincial towns – e.g., in the Chernigov province the Klinttsy Union of Anarchist-Syndicalists (Klintsevskiy Soyuz Anarkhistov-Sindikalistov) was active. After the union and its organizations – club and library – were shut down by the authorities in 1921, the organisation continued to function illegally, conducting meetings and propaganda work among workers and young people. Union member Khaim Vaninskiy maintained connections with the exiled Secretariat of the Russian Confederation of Anarchist-Syndicalists (Rossiyskaya Konfederatsiya Anarkhistov-Sindikalistov, RKAS) and Moscow anarcho-communists.

After Kharkov, the second most important city where the anarchists kept up the struggle was Odessa. It was a hub for anarchist activities in the Ukraine as early as 1904. According to the testimony of the well-known Makhnovist and Nabat anarchist Viktor Belash given in 1937, the Odessa group, via the legendary "grandmother" of Ukrainian and Russian anarchism Olga Taratuta who was freed from internal exile in the North of Russia in early 1924, established an illegal channel via the Soviet-Polish border near Rovno. Using this "corridor," anarchists smuggled literature into the USSR, sent couriers abroad and into the USSR etc. The Rovno "corridor" was used by anarchists in different cities: the émigré literature was delivered not just into the Ukraine, but also to Moscow, Leningrad, Kursk, Volga Region etc. One of the activists of the Kharkov Nabat, Pomeranets, crossed the border repeatedly and maintained regular connections with the RKAS Secretariat in Berlin and with the anarcho-Makhnovist centres in Warsaw and Bucharest.

The renewal of the inter-regional connections and stirring up of the anarchist underground permitted them to consider holding a congress of the Ukrainian anarchists – their first since September 1920. The Kharkov group planned it for August 1924 but the circumstances were not favourable for these plans.

In late 1923 and in the first half of 1924 the Kharkov Nabat members have managed to organise and lead several economic strikes in factories and railroad workshops. The forms used were not just of classic strikes, but also of “Italian” strikes (“work-to-rule”). The demands in these industrial actions were usually the reduction of production norms or refusal to raise them (slogans that were urgent at the times of the New Economic Policy). In most cases that was successful.

But the rise of the industrial action tide and growth of the anarchist movement were stopped by GPU repressions. In Spring 1924 arrests of underground anarchist groups were undertaken in Yuzovo (the local leader Otto Retovskiy was since then permanently confined to prison and internal exile), Poltava (the liquidated group was headed by the former Makhnovist commander Dmitry Bozhko) and Klintsy. In August 1924 a series of simultaneous arrests of anarchists undermined the clandestine work in Kharkov, Kiev and Ekaterinoslav. By the end of the year in Kharkov alone over 70 people were arrested, accused of active anarchist clandestine work. The most active of them were sentenced by the OGPU board to imprisonment at the Solovki Special Purpose Camp or at the political isolators, the rest were internally exiled or were limited in their choice of place to live (so-called “minuses”).

The arrests continued later. In February 1925 a summary by the UkrSSR GPU reported that the GPU organs had discovered the interconnected underground groups of anarchists and Makhnovists in Ekaterinoslav, Belaya Tserkov, Novograd-Volynsky, Mariupol and Berdyansk. – Obviously by the time the summary was compiled all of these groups were liquidated.

After the 1924 arrests, there remained a clandestine anarchist group in Kharkov in the mid- to late-1920s although its propaganda work was undertaken on a much smaller scale now. The anarchists managed to maintain connections with the émigré centres, continued verbal propaganda among the

That same year there was also some dubious reports on collaboration between the Dnepropetrovsk anarchists and “left-wing opposition”: ostensibly, anarchists and Trotskyites together attempted to cause strikes at the factories and at the railroad.

Odessa anarchists made an attempt to revitalize their activity around the boundary of 1928 and 1929. Under the pretence of a New Year’s celebration they gathered together at a conference but were arrested by the GPU. In all, some 20 people were held, including activists who were known from the Civil War and even Tsarist times – Aron Vainshtein, Abram Vulis, Lev and Abram Rabinovich, Berta Tubisman, as well as young students and workers Lev Vainberg, Yakov and Aron Gekselman, Lazar Rabinovich and others.

In spring and summer 1929, in the situation of complete collectivization, the aforementioned ex-Makhnovists’ communes were dispersed. The openly anarchist members, such as the Sharovskiy brothers, Ivan Chuchko or Maxim Podkova, were expelled from the Ukraine, and the communes themselves were reorganised into collective and state farms.

According to OGPU data, in the first half-year of 1929, 62 anarchists and 40 Makhnovists were arrested in the UkrSSR.

In summer 1929 the adherents of Pyotr Arshinov and Nestor Makhno’s “Organisational Platform” made an attempt to spread their activity into the Ukraine. By that time a collective of anarchist old-timers who worked on the organisation of Union of Anarchist Workers (Soyuz Rabochikh Anarkhistov) formed in Moscow. Groups connected to the Union were organised in several cities in European Russia, the Urals and Siberia. In the summer of that year David Skitalets, the “ardent ‘Arshinovite’ and experienced illegal worker” as his comrades characterised him, went to the South on a Union commission. He visited the port cities of the Ukraine and Crimea and managed to establish connections with the Black Sea Fleet sailors. With the aid of these sailors the Moscow “centre”



mission from the Bucharest centre of the Makhnovist émigrés to establish connections with the former Makhnovists and underground anarchist groups. Having fulfilled their task, both Makhnovist agents safely returned to Romania. In 1929 Kusch and Chuprina again illegally visited the Odessa region to reconnect with the Makhnovist underground and ostensibly to organise peasants unhappy with the collectivization into insurgent detachments. On their way back both of them were arrested by the OGPU and re-recruited. – Although the “re-recruited” Kusch, upon his return to Romania, informed his émigré comrades about his relationships with the OGPU and later led a double game misinforming the Soviet secret services.

There is relatively little information on the late 1920s anarchists apart from the anarcho-Makhnovist underground.

1927 is marked by a “standalone” case of anarchist Noi Varshavskiy. He had been an anarchist sympathizer since 1911 but previously hadn’t taken any sort of active part in the anarchist movement. By 1927 he worked as a deputy head of the labour protection department in the Central Committee of the chemical industry trade union. In Summer 1927 he visited Moscow where he took part in old anarchists’ meetings – which is probably how the OGPU got him in their sights. On August 27, 1927, Varshavskiy was arrested at the Odessa train station immediately after paying a visit to Olga Taratuta. During the arrest eight copies of a leaflet supporting the American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in Varshavskiy’s handwriting were confiscated. The leaflet protested the Soviet authorities’ abuse of Sacco and Vanzetti’s names at the same time as in reality Soviet Russia itself bore thousands of similarly martyred anarchists. After a four-month investigation, during which Varshavskiy shifted all the blame onto himself and shielded the Moscow anarchists and Taratuta in whatever way he could, in December 1927 he was sentenced by the OGPU Board OSO to 3 years in a political isolator.

industrial and office workers, gathered money for exiled comrades in the Anarchist Black Cross fund.

Anarchists who were set free after years-long imprisonment, in some cases started during the Civil War, also joined these clandestine activities. In late 1925 the aforementioned Viktor Belash was allowed out of the Kharkov GPU prison. He reestablished his membership in the underground KAU immediately and on a commission from the Kharkov group undertook a tour of the Makhnovist region in 1925–1926 with the purpose of establishing connections with the former insurgents, discovering underground groups and connecting them with Kharkov.

It has to be mentioned that the former Makhnovists also experienced an upsurge in interest from the punitive organs in mid-twenties. For instance, in June 1926 the UkrSSR GPU issued a top secret summary “On Makhnovists.” Among other things it mentioned that “Makhno is resuming his attempts at ideological leadership of the kulak elements of the village,” due to which the GPU organs were compelled to expose the former Makhnovists and maintain control over them, especially in the regions where the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine (Revolutsionnaya Povstancheskaya Armiya Ukrainy, RPAU) was active in 1919–1921.

Fulfilling his commission, during 1927 Belash established relations with the Makhnovists in Huliaipole. They were led locally by brothers Vlas and Vasiliy Sharovskiy. It is interesting that Vasiliy Sharovskiy at the time was a committed anarchist although he was a candidate to join the Communist Party and a member of the local Soviet – although during the heyday of the Makhnovist movement he belonged first to the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries and then was a Bolshevik sympathizer. The former Makhnovists in Huliaipole were holding meetings every now and then, some were “educating the anarcho-Makhnovist youth” (like one of the Chubenko brothers in Novonikolayevka), attempting to organise communes and artels. The most economically successful of those was the

Avangard commune in Basan village in the Pologovskiy district of Dnepropetrovskaya oblast. Ex-insurgents' communes also existed in the Greek village of Kermenchik, in Bolshaya Yanisol, in Konstantinovka, near Grishino. However, according to Belash, their development and particularly re-establishment of anarchist activity were hindered by lack of people capable of organisational and propaganda work, corruption of everyday life and falling prey to philistinism. Moreover, some of the communards were gradually turning from Makhnovists into Bolsheviks. Another hindrance to the anarchist work was also the lack of trust between the former Makhnovists who felt the attention from the punitive organs and were wary of GPU provocations – some thought that Belash's sudden appearance in their region was one.

Among the anarchists who distrusted Belash during his trip was the group led by the well-known Makhnovist commander Avraam Budanov. After being pardoned in late 1923, Budanov settled in Mariupol and by mid-1920s he organised and headed an underground group that conducted propaganda among workers in Mariupol and the peasants in the nearby villages and distributed duplicated leaflets. Upon meeting Belash, Budanov studiously showed his disillusionment in political activity, although he was interested in the state of affairs in the Kharkov organisation. Belash was misled by this "security ruse" – and as it soon turned out, for no good reason.

According to the USSR OGPU, the Budanov group, prompted by the start of complete collectivization in 1928, was intending to move from agitation and propaganda work to organising peasant anarchist guerrilla detachments and was gathering arms for that purpose. Shortly before the (ostensibly) scheduled rising, in late 1928 the group was arrested, and the searches at the members' homes discovered a cache of arms. The GPU sentenced Budanov and another active ex-Makhnovist, Panteleimon Belochub to death by the firing squad. It is curious that during the Makhnovschina Belochub

was characterised as an anarchist "with a Soviet deviation," had some unclear relation to Yevgeniy Polonskiy's Bolshevik conspiracy [see endnote] and in early 1921 deserted the RPAU and surrendered under an amnesty.

A similar, highly secretive clandestine group was active at the same time in the Mezhevskiy district of the Dnepropetrovsk oblast. It was led by the pardoned Left SR and anarchist Ivan Chernoknizhniy, former chairman of the Makhnovist Revolutionary War Council. In 1928 the GPU arrested seven members of Chernoknizhniy's group and confiscated 17 bombs, 10 rifles, 1340 cartridges and other weaponry. Regretfully, there is no available information about the connections between Budanov's and Chernoknizhniy's groups.

The information on arrests of anarcho-Makhnovist groups in Mariupol, Mezhevskiy district and in Odessa is contained in the OGPU information summary letter #34 "On anarchists," dated December 1928. The letter demanded that special attention of the punitive organs be paid to "the remainder of anarcho-Makhnovshchina." Among the concrete measures offered were systematic work on exposing the former RPAU cadres and their current anti-Soviet activity, as well as arresting 'anarcho-kulak' groups in the villages. The letter also mentioned that throughout 1928 23 anarchists and 21 Makhnovists were arrested in the Ukraine.

Speaking of the anarcho-Makhnovist underground, the attempts by the Makhnovist centres abroad to revitalise the activity of their confederates in the UkrSSR can't be ignored. Strictly speaking, at the time we describe (late 1920s) there were two such centres – in Paris around Makhno and in Bucharest, led by the former RPAU artillery commander-in-chief Vasiliy Danilov. It was the Bucharest centre – due to its vicinity to the Ukraine – that was particularly active, sending its agents into Soviet territory. For example, in September 1928 the Soviet-Romanian border was crossed by Makhnovist men Foma Kusch and Konstantin Chuprina who visited Odessa and Huliaipole on a com-