

Exiled

Antti Rautiainen

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In the far North-West of a once mighty empire, there is a distant province, mostly known due to the sluggishness of its inhabitants. They have still not gotten rid of the statue of a czar, who ruled 150 years ago, in the central square of their capital. Inhabitants of the province have never won a single war, but they have a plenty of other reasons to be proud – for example, a ski-jumper who achieved a lot in 1980, but has since then struggled with a substance abuse problem.

This province is in a state of stagnation, but its inhabitants are relieved from death by boredom, as they have the option to travel to St. Petersburg on weekends and carouse. And to such distant and boring provinces the Third section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery used to exile youth, who got carried away by the many temptations of the capital, and made toasts to the Decembrists. Now, the Federal Security Service has exiled me there, for crimes just as outrageous.

How do I feel now? Soon I will be 33 years old, of these, I have lived 13 in Russia. How did I end up living in Moscow, I will write another time, but now, my job, my flat, most of my friends, beloved person and all my modest belongings are in Russia. I do not have a single Finnish-speaking friend, or even an acquaintance in Moscow. I only speak Finnish when I visit my parents or old friends in Finland, 3–4 times a year. I cannot even say, whether I think more often in the Russian or Finnish language.

When Finland was my country of residence, I had no mobile phone, and I did not pay with euros but with Finnish marks. I never searched for a flat in Finland, nor a job, except summer-time student jobs, I never had a bonus card at a chain store. I know how it is to be a kid or a teenager in Finland, but I do not have the slightest idea about how grown-ups are living there.

My temporary residence permit was annulled, with a reference to the following statutes of the migration law of Russian federation: "A temporary residence permit is not given to a foreign citizen, and previously given permit is annulled, in the case that the foreign citizen 1) Is making statements for the violent overthrow of the fundamentals of the constitutional order of the Russian Federation, or is by other means endangering security of Russian Federation or citizens of the Russian Federation"

Is that really what I am doing?

First, in the Russian Federation "order" and "constitution" are two fundamentally different issues. Whoever is following what is happening in this country, can easily point out plenty of chapters of the constitution, which have nothing to do with the current order of things. FSB did

not bother to point out, if it is the “current order” or the “constitution” I am making statements against.

However, it is not only the current order which is the problem, but the constitution as well. For example, I have no idea what the point is in having a president or a state дума. If we wanted a democracy, it would be more consistent to realise it through direct democracy and imperative mandates, which was the original meaning of the word “democracy”. And obviously, there can be no democracy in a situation, in which a small part of the population owns billions, and others barely have a living wage, or are living based on a subsistence economy in the first place.

Second, I definitely have never made any statements for the VIOLENT overthrow of the constitutional order of the Russian Federation. For sure, violence might be necessary, but I have nothing against a relatively non-violent model of revolution through a general workers’ strike.

And am I really a “security threat to the Russian Federation”? I would like to be, but honestly speaking, I doubt it.

Me and few dozens of my friends have a tradition to run through the streets of Moscow few times a year, wave red and black flags and yell slogans against the regime. The content of this ritual varies, but the form is always pretty much the same. In order to promote this concept, we founded the Moscow group of the “Autonomous Action”-organisation more than ten years ago. Back then, besides me and two friends of mine, with whom we founded the group, in the city there were no more than five other anarchists, interested in organising such actions. Even now, our concept has still not gained the support of the movement as a whole. As traditionally, Russian anarchists consider that “action” means stabbing someone with a dagger, or at least blowing something up or burning it down. If you don’t have the guts for that, then write some wise books and discuss them in the kitchen.

During the last ten years, several thousand people participated in our actions. For the majority of them, one or two times was enough, and they found some other interests. And now, 10 years after, we are not many more. Of course I hope, that all those thousands now have some experience of resistance, and if one day the authorities act far too outrageously, they will join us. Something like that happened, when in April of 2008 cops were brutally torturing youth in the Sokolniki police station, and in Khimki almost two years ago it was the same. It is true, that maybe half of the people at the Khimki action were at their first demonstration ever, and many of the other people there had nothing to do with the anarchist movement.

But if the FSB now, after all those years of following us, decided that our concept has some perspective, it at least gives some hope that I did not waste the best years of my life.

The first time I met with FSB operatives was 11 years ago. I already wrote about the three people, with whom I founded Moscow group of Autonomous Action. About the fourth one was an FSB agent, who infiltrated our group. He presented himself as Alexey Tushin, and only many years later we learned, that apparently his real surname is Krutov.

Krutov had a dull, pale and flegmatic face, under his nose — a blonde moustache. He had some similar features to a mouse. Back then, normal anarchists always came half an hour or an hour late to meetings, whereas he came 15 minutes beforehand — already from this I should have drawn the conclusion that he was scum. Due to lacking any talent whatsoever, Krutov’s career as an infiltrator came to a swift end, and apparently he has not made any progress with it since. Eleven years have passed, and he is working with the same issues. I feel offended, that we are monitored exclusively by the most miserable and hopeless secret service operatives. But

obviously, every FSB academy graduate with any amount of intelligence, has long made it into the economic crimes department and is living well off with the bribe money made there.

Why did Krutov decide to infiltrate our group? Perhaps because back then, we supported some of the arrested members of the “New Revolutionary Alternative”, an underground group which made various actions, such as the night-time bombing of the Moscow FSB reception in Kuznetski Most.

The political program of the NRA was vague, some of their actions rather stupid — I supported them mostly because they were friends of my friends. Now I understand their motivations better, but back then, Krutov drew the conclusion that we were not about to continue on the NRA path. Perhaps, due to his reports, the FSB considered that I posed no security risk for the ten years that followed. Shortly before Krutov was uncovered, one comrade of mine ended up at an interrogation with another FSB operative, which also had the pale face of a mouse. The officer was straightforward, agreeing that action of my friend was just some drunken stupidity, but he promised 3 or 4 years in prison, if my friend was not ready to cooperate. This “cooperation” would mean hinting to the FSB about any planned unsanctioned actions, and also reporting on the activities of all the foreign activists in Moscow — “with the exception of Antti Rautiainen, as he is not a dangerous type — he is in Russia exclusively in order to evade military service in Finland”.

If they changed their minds about us, maybe it is because after a break of almost ten years, now Moscow anarchists are once again blowing things up and burning things down. And once again — some of these actions are stupid, I do not think it makes any sense to declare an individual war and to burn police cars and police stations just because they are police cars and stations. But some other actions, such as the arsons against the construction machinery in the Khimki forest — well, they are right on target.

Maybe this is happening because after ten years of stubborn organising, the Moscow anarchist movement has finally reached a scale, where it is no longer obvious, who should be nicked after such actions. Or perhaps these actions have nothing to do with the activism of “Autonomous Action”, which does not result in anything more serious than misdemeanor charges.

But in any case, after the FSB and the “Center to Counteract Extremism” failed dismally in their search for “insurrectionist anarchists”, they decided to start the harrassment of the Autonomous Action of Moscow. And why not — money has been wasted, results are zero, but they need to write an account. And maybe it is not such a bad thing after all — let them spy out who to fine 500 roubles for organising an unsanctioned demonstration, while in some other place, someone is planning more radical actions.

But maybe the most likely explanation is that there are no special plans against me or against Autonomous Action of Moscow, and this has nothing to do with an increase of repression after elections. When my application for a permanent residence permit was passed from the Federal Migration Service to the FSB, it may have ended up on the desk of some 22-year old idiot, who just finished his studies — or maybe some loser just a few years away from a pension. The bureaucrat checked my file, and just for some change in his boring work, put a red stamp on my papers. Just as some other bureaucratic nobody decided to give a green light just two years ago, when they were handling my appeal for a temporary residence permit. I do not think my file has changed a lot during these last two years. In Russia, many things depend on a completely random course of events and on the feelings of bureaucrats, and it is completely possible that this time too, it

was enough to wreck a multitude of human relations, and to completely change the course of my life.

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