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My summer trip to the Black Guard Camp

Report about an anarchist camp in Ukraine

Arkadiy Povazhniy

19th October 2003

Many people know Proudhon's famous phrase "Anarchy is the Mother of Order" but, unfortunately, after a long time of being twisted in the public consciousness, almost everybody has a bad association with anarchy, considering it to be chaos and anarchists to be a drunken mob.

In August I was at a camp organized by the Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (RKAS) Makhno from Donetsk. At first there was the travel from Donetsk to Izyum to Diborovo to Belaya Gorka (a remote place on a riverbank). The travel went down without any adventures but a week before this, it had rained for almost a week and there were lots of puddles and flooding in the forest. In order to make it through the forest, you sometimes had to go through this muck which could come up to your knees or sometimes even up to your waist. In addition, our group of 23 was carrying quite a load – besides tents and personal belongings, we had to lug provisions for 2 weeks. The weather was unpredictable – it rained and cleared up only to pour down again. We had to

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send reconnaissance ahead to find the best trails and at one time it poured for two days straight. Nobody had any dry clothes left, it was near impossible to dry anything and when people started to dry their shoes and socks by the fire, a lot of them burned.

When the weather finally cleared up, the anarchist commune came to life. Despite the stereotype that anarchists are a disorganized crowd, at the general meetings the daily agendas were set. There was a taboo on drinking and smoking and playing cards. It should be noted that everybody observed these rules.

The days looked like this: we got up at 5:30 (people on duty at 4). We had tea to wake us up and at 6 there was training with exercise, running and meditation. After breakfast there were psycho-training sessions. Later there was hand-to-hand combat and training on collective resistance at actions. During the theoretical sessions we discussed problems in the Ukraine and around the world. Everybody told something about the situation in their city or country. (There were comrades from France, Germany and Spain at the camp.) There was talk on the theme of mass fascist currents and how this problem may be solved by active work with the public, especially with youth. After dinner there were campfires and each night there was a talk on a particular subject, for example on the theory of anarchism or history. (I personally did a talk on the psychological character of Nestor Makhno.) There were talks on the history of UNA – UNSO and on skinheads amongst many others.

I should add that in addition to my great moral satisfaction, I also improved my physical condition. I have to say that anarchists do not live up to their stereotype and Proudhon's saying should not be treated as a joke. Practice shows that anarchist society is capable of building an ideal world with self-discipline, self-management and can make order!