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Antti Rautiainen
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3 July 2024

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that there was nothing that could be done for a person imprisoned in the “people’s republics ”. Ironically, less than a year later, Max found himself in the same position.

In 2000–2002, I lived in Moscow in a commune which was visited by many anarchists from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Max left there several tapes that he had made himself; I was allowed to take my favorite ones when I moved to the PFUR University dorm, including Bob Marley’s Uprising. Bob Marley was familiar to me before, but resonated with me only after I listened to Max ‘s tapes.

Max was then, and still now considers himself Orthodox. I don’t know which of the many Orthodox churches in Ukraine he belongs to. He wrote on religious topics on his Facebook after joining the battles near Kiev in 2022. I have always been far from any religions, but thanks to people like Max and Dmitry Petrov, I realized that there is no contradiction between anarchism and personal religious beliefs (the attitude of anarchism to institutional religions is, of course, another matter).

Max, thank you for everything — for saving our friends from trouble, for inspiration, for the camp in which I met those who are still my close friends.

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sacre of Jews and Poles, it is simply a symbol of resistance to totalitarianism.

There were also misunderstandings between German LGBT — queers and Eastern antifa in connection with vocabulary and manner of communication. The risks of problems with local right-wingers and the cops were always in the air, especially after visiting activists ignored the plans of the organizers to avoid sharp confrontations with the local authorities, and carried out small-scale direct actions during the demonstrations.

Max was the one who resolved all these conflicts and everyday problems in the camp. Due to the weakness of the Ukrainian movement, the local organizing group was small, and he held the greatest responsibility for everything. He was enormously stressed from start to finish, chain-smoked and never again organized any camps against the borders .

But nevertheless, all the conflicts were more or less resolved, the area was incredibly beautiful, the atmosphere, despite the many conflicts, was friendly. I met some of the people who are still my closest friends. Ukrainian activists were not able to organize new camps, but this one was a useful, important and unforgettable experience for me personally. A more detailed report on the camp was published in issue 29 of the Avtonom journal.

From Bob Marley to the support of partisan Sinchenko

But I had met Max for the first time much earlier, in the winter of 2000 in Moscow. We communicated rarely and always exclusively on business, the last time was shortly before the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine. I was trying to figure out how to help Grigory Sinchenko, a partisan and anarchist sympathizer who was engaged in sabotage and attempts against law enforcement agencies in 2020 in Donetsk. Max investigated the issue, but concluded

logo drawn by a member of the Kiev anarcho group "Tigra Nigra," of which Max was a member. This logo would later become the logo of the organization "Without Borders", founded by Max. I still have the T — shirt.

Now, during the war, the "little green men" and the almost complete closure of borders (from people, not from capital) in Eastern Europe, anti-border camps seem like a distant dream. This is an indication of how much we have been forced to retreat over the past 20 years. It must be said that even then the demands to remove all borders were utopian, and the camps were not a broad mass movement; only anarchists, autonomists, radical anti-fascists and fighters for the rights of migrants participated in them.

The largest anti-border camp in Eastern Europe was organized by Max and his comrades in Zakapartya of Ukraine from August 11 to 20, 2007, with about 300 people participating. In the camp there were actions directed outward, for example, protests at local deportation centers, but they also held about a hundred workshops and meetings on a variety of topics other than migration, discussing anti-fascism, feminism, animal rights, homophobia, environmental problems, free software, housing self-government, cooperative economy etc.

Before I participated in the Transcarpathian camp, I had already gone to 3 of the 4 camps against the borders that had been organized in Poland in 2000–2003. For me, after 20 years of living in Finland and 8 years of living in Moscow, the culture shock in Transcarpathia was greater than in the Polish anti-border camps. First, some Belarusian antifa hung up a white-red-white flag. We, "Muscovites" were, of course, shocked by such "nationalism", but the Belarusian anarchists explained to us why this was normal: the flag of the democratic opposition is not the flag of vile state patriotism. Second, some Ukrainian antifa from Lviv wore UPA T -shirts, which also shocked us. But they explained to us that in western Ukraine, the symbols of the UPA do not mean approving the mas-

A veteran of the anarchist and anti-fascist movement of Ukraine, Maxim Butkevich, has been a prisoner of war of the Russian army for two years. Anarchists could write more about him, and my text about him also comes late, but there is little that can be done to help him.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Max, who had the rank of reserve lieutenant, volunteered for the Ukrainian Armed Forces. He participated in the liberation of the Kiev region from the occupiers , but in June 2022 he was captured in Eastern Ukraine. He was surrounded, and, deciding to surrender, saved the life of his company. Propaganda videos about prisoners of war soon appeared, and he was noticed in them. Filming such videos in itself is a war crime, but his family and friends could rejoice that he had not been shot or starved to death in imprisonment.

A 13 year term as a reward for activism

In the spring of 2023, Max was sentenced to 13 years in the so called "Luhansk Peoples Republic" under the articles of "cruel treatment of civilians" , "the use of prohibited methods during an armed conflict", as well as "attempted murder." During the trial, he was not even able to have a lawyer of his choice; the first time a lawyer was able to communicate with him was on the day of the appeal hearing, the 22nd of August 2023, via video link from Moscow.

Max is innocent: the crimes allegedly occurred in Severodonetsk, but his unit arrived there only 10 days after the stated date. Max initially admitted his guilt, and it's clear why — there is no reason to participate in this circus where the outcome is predetermined.

His term is a kind of reward from the Russian regime for human rights activities over the past 20 years. The absurdity of the accusation was obvious to both Oleg Orlov from Memorial and Svetlana Gannushkina from Civic Assistance, perhaps the two most well-

known living human rights fighters in Russia. Both of whom know Max well and came to the appeal hearing, where they were able to talk to him via video link for the first time (and the penultimate time) since his arrest, during a break in the session.

The last (for now) opportunity to see Max was during the consideration during the consideration of the appeal in the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation on Wednesday, the 13th March 2024. This time the jailers no longer allowed Max to communicate with the public except through gestures, but Max was cheerful and smiling. Svetlana Gannushkina came, but Oleg Orlov is now serving a prison sentence of 2.5 years, because he told the truth about the war in Ukraine. This time Max denied any guilt, saying that he admitted it because of torture, and because in exchange for his confession he was promised a quick inclusion in the prisoner exchange (they lied, of course). The Supreme Court, naturally, did not care about all this; the verdict was upheld.

Because of Max's fame and connections throughout the world, there is no shortage of people willing to finance his lawyers, but lawyers are actually prevented from communicating with him. Letters and parcels were returned for a long time with the Stalinist trademark note "correspondence is not allowed". Only in the spring of 2024, almost 2 years after his arrest, he began to receive some letters, but they are currently once again not being allowed through.

We can only hope for an exchange of prisoners, but since Max is hated by the Kremlin, and was not friends with the Ukrainian authorities either, I'm afraid he will not appear on the exchange lists any time soon. Numerous texts about what a wonderful person Max is will most likely not reach him, and do nothing to particularly help him. But, I hope, there will be no harm from them either, therefore, I am writing.

Living according to your own principles

I heard second-hand that Max even quite recently considered himself an anarchist, though I am not certain about this since he himself did not advertise any anarchist convictions recently. And by and large this does not make any difference, since he lived exactly as an anarchist should live. Advertised or not, Max for me is in many ways an exemplary anarchist.

At work, he was involved in serious journalistic matters, including investigations about Ukrainian fascists, due to which he received threats. But after work, like many activists, he began his second working day — protecting migrants. In one of the poorest countries in Europe, this is a completely thankless task. People don't understand — don't we have enough problems of our own? Why worry about the rights of some incomprehensible "extremists" from Uzbekistan? These were the most vulnerable people in the Ukraine, and for Max their rights were a necessity. He actually saved the lives of many, including many anti-fascists who fled Russia after fights with fascists or the attacks on the city administration in Khimki.

There are several ways to be an anarchist. An anarchist can, for example, be an underground fighter and go into direct conflict with the authorities in every area. But an anarchist can also seek maximum opportunities to influence society through public means, but without trying to take power. This is why many anarchists get into journalism or human rights advocacy. Max did both, and excelled.

Against borders

He was inspired in this direction by, among other things, the anti-border (no border) camps that were held in various European countries in the late 90s and 2000s , including Poland in 2000–2004. The first Polish camp against the borders in Ustrzyki Górne, had a