

# **The anarchist tradition on Yugoslav soil**

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## Origins

Anarchist ideas began to surface on Yugoslav territory during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through Yugoslavs who had worked or been educated in European countries where the workers' movement was strong. While studying law and economics in Munich and Zurich, the Serbian socialist Zivojin Zujovic (1838–1870) became one of the first people to espouse Proudhon's ideas. He was Serbia's first socialist and mentor to Svetozar Markovic (1846–1875), an organiser and theorist of the Serbian labour movement. There was a sizeable colony of southern Slav students and revolutionaries in Switzerland who kept in touch with Bakunin and with the Slavic section of the Jura Federation. They included Jovan Zujovic, Manojlo Hrvacanin, Pera Todorovic and others. At the beginning of 1872 Zurich hosted the congress of Serbian socialists in which Bakunin took part and during which the Serbian Socialist Party's programme was drawn up.

The national liberation struggle of the southern Slav territories (a struggle primarily to liberate these areas from Austria-Hungarian and Turkish control) encouraged a widespread receptivity to freedom-focused thinking.

During the 1875 uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a leftist trend that championed a social programme. It was led by Vasa Pelagic and enjoyed the support of anarchists such as Manojlo Hrvacanin (1849–1909), Kosta Ugrinic (1848–1933) and others. Many Italian anarchists were involved in the uprisings (Malatesta himself making two attempts to enter Bosnia-Herzegovina), as well as anarchists from Russia and other parts of Europe.

In early April 1871 Johann Most arrived in Ljubljana and there came into contact with members of the Workers' Society. Matija Kunc, the Society's chairman, was a propagandist for Most's ideas. In many prosecution cases against the radical wing of the Austro-Hungarian socialists in Zagreb, Celovic and Graz, both Croat and Slovene anarchists were among the accused. Anarchist influence (in the shape of, say, R. Golouh, Giovanni Marchetti and Ivan Endliher) also made headway into Dalmatia via Trieste and Ancona. Anarchist demonstrations were held in Rovigo (1904) and Split (1908). The Croat teacher, Milos Krpan, was in touch with the Swiss anarchists from 1898 on: he spread anarchist ideas among the so-called Independent Socialists group in Slavonski Brod and district (including Dubrovnik) and in 1909 and 1910 attempted to lay the foundations for an International Anarchist Colony. The Austro-Hungarian authorities banned the importation and circulation of anarchist newspapers and books in southern Slav territories under their control.

## Anarchism and national liberation

Freedom-centred ideas entered Macedonia through young people who had been students in Switzerland and Bulgaria at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1897 and 1898 two anarchist papers were published from Geneva – *Glas* (The Voice) and *Otmachtenie* of the so-called Secret Macedonian Revolutionary Committee fighting for Macedonia's liberation from the Turks and for the establishment of a socialist Balkan Federation. The ideas of Russian populism and anarchism were espoused by the first Macedonian socialist Vasil Glavinov (1869–1929). In Sofia, Glavinov met Gotche Deltchev (1872–1903), a leading light of the struggle to liberate Macedonia and founder of the Adrianopolis-based Macedonian Secret Revolutionary Organisation (set up in Salonika in October 1893), the man behind the revolutionary uprising on St Elias's day in 1903.

Deltchev also had a hand in establishing the “Republic of Krusevo”, the Balkans’ first socialist republic (it survived for nearly three months).

Deltchev was in close contact and personal friends with the leading Bulgarian anarchists Mihail Guerdzhikov and Varban Kilifarski. Lots of other anarchist fighters for an independent Macedonia gathered around Deltchev, among them Petar Mandzhukov (1879–1966) who published *The ABC of Anarchist Doctrine* in Skopje in 1898, Dame Gruev (1871–1906), Jane Sandanski (1872–1915), Nikola Karev (1877–1905), Dimo Hadzidimov (1875–1915) and others. The Macedonian anarchists also had a secret “brodara” terrorist group, the Guemidzija, in Salonika (members included Jordan Pop-Jardanov, Marko Bosnakov, Dimiter Mecev, Konstantin Kirkov, Pavel Satev, Milan Arsov and Vladimir Pingov). By organising a wave of bomb attacks on public buildings they sought to focus the eyes of the world upon the Macedonian liberation struggle (1903). Some of them were killed, others captured, sentenced to death or banished to Turkey.

An international Balkan revolutionary anarchist association called the “Red Brotherhood” was active from 1910 to 1912 in Salonika, Strumitsa, Kumanovo and Kratovo and fought the Turks in an effort to liberate Macedonia.

## **Attentats in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

The campaign for national and social liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, under Austro-Hungarian occupation since 1878, culminated in the emergence of an anarchist-style revolutionary youth movement known as Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia). This was led by Bogdan Zerajic (1886–1910), a great admirer of Kropotkin. Zerajic perished in an attempt to assassinate the governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Varesanin. This assassination bid in June 1910 failed and Zerajic used his last remaining bullet on himself. The police then decapitated his corpse which was burned in secret and kept the head in the police collection as an exemplar of an anarchist head.

In June 1912, Luka Jukic attempted the life of Governor Cuvaj in Zagreb, but this too failed, Jukic was sentenced to life imprisonment but was freed when the Empire collapsed. Sentenced along with him to a five year prison term was August Cesarec (1893–1941), writer and future publisher of leftwing reviews (Plamen, 1919). The assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and last remaining descendent of the Habsburg dynasty, Franz Ferdinand, was organised in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 by members of the Young Bosnia group. The first of them Nedeljko Cabrinovic (1895–1916), a type-setter, threw a bomb at the Archduke but it failed to explode: so Franz Ferdinand continued with his journey. Whereupon Gavrilo Princip assassinated him with a revolver. Some 25 conspirators were brought to trial: one of them was Danilo Ilic (1890–1915) who was hanged. Gavrilo Princip was sentenced to 20 years’ hard labour and died of disease and torture. At the trial, Cabrinovic declared that his involvement in the assassination has been the result of his anarchist beliefs. He died of hunger and mental illness in prison, at the age of 20. One spiritual sponsor of Serbian anarchist youth was Vladimir Gacinovic (1890–1917) who had fallen in with Russian revolutionary emigres who had gone into exile in the wake of the 1905 revolution: that was while he had been a student in Geneva and Lausanne. Gacinovic was a follower of Bakunin, Kropotkin and members of the Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will) group. He was friendly with Victor Serge, Natanson, Martov and the early Trotsky. He was poisoned in Switzerland by the police (with the connivance of many countries, including Austria, Serbia and France) in August 1917.

In close contact with Young Bosnia there was a group known as Preprod (rebirth) in Ljubljana (Slovenia): this had come into existence in 1911–1912 around a newspaper of the same name. Its most active members were France Fabijancic and Ivan Endliher, who were in touch with Gacinovic. Especially between 1910 and 1914, these two groups were in tune with the ideas of Yugoslav liberation and unification and worked to create a united Yugoslav revolutionary youth movement.

## **Serbian anarcho-syndicalism**

Hungarian revolutionary syndicalism was embraced by anarchists in the Vojvodina around the figure of Krostó Iskruljev (1881–1914), a close colleague of Ervin Szabo, a Hungarian anarcho-syndicalist theorist.

After Zivojin Zujovic anarchist ideas in Serbia were to be taken up by Dragisa Stanojevic (1884–1918), Mita Cenic (1851–1888) and Pera Todorovic (1852–1907), the latter being the founder of the first Serbian socialist newspaper, *Rad* (Labour) in 1874 and a friend of Bakunin since his student teacher days in Zurich. There was also Jovan Zujovic (1856–1936), a renowned geologist and President of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, and others. During the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century anarcho-syndicalist ideas penetrated Serbia, with newspapers like *Proleter* (1906) and *Radnicka Borba* (1907) and a faction on the left wing of the Serbian Social Democratic Party — known as the *Direktasi* — advocating direct action tactics. Their leading light was Krsto Cicvaric (1879–1944), founder of many newspapers such as *Hleb i Sloboda* (Bread and Freedom) in 1905, and *Radnicka Borba* (Workers' Struggle) in 1907. He founded groups of anarchist workers and wrote a book entitled *The Anarchist Programme* in 1909. After the Great War he withdrew from the movement. In Paris, Milorad Popovic (1874–1905) founded a Yugoslav Workers' Society and a Social Action Committee (1900). He later moved to Budapest where he published Serbian socialist newspapers before returning to Serbia in 1904. At all times he kept faith with the ideas of revolutionary syndicalism which he put into practice by founding a number of independent trade unions. The *Direktasi* (Nedeljko Divac, Vljajko Martinovic, Sima Markovic, Vasa Knezevic, etc.) were an anarcho-syndicalist faction within the Serbian Social Democratic Party, emerging in 1909. They were later expelled from the party. Sima Markovic went on to become secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia before falling out with Stalin and being imprisoned during the purges in the USSR where he died in 1939.

## **Monarchy and state communism**

Between the world wars, the anarchist movement in King Alexander's monarchist Yugoslavia was unable to prosper because of its republican, federalist and socialist ideas, openly repressed by the king's out and out dictatorship. Yet around 200 people made the journey from Yugoslavia to fight for the Spanish Republic and they included many who professed a libertarian brand of socialism.

After the Second World War, Yugoslavia was run by a Communist Party that outlawed all other political groups. The introduction of certain forms of self-management (following the break with Stalin in 1948) as well as the student unrest in 1968 which introduced a new generation into public life, aroused considerable interest in anarchist ideas (books by Kropotkin, Bakunin

and Daniel Guérin were translated and published and anarchist ideas and practices have been publicly debated and written about).

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