

Resistant Cultures:

Punk Identity and Anarchist Resistance in three Yugoslav successor states

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PROJECT ABSTRACT

This project attempts to discover the roots of the anarchist movement and reveal any connections to the punk subculture (both historic and contemporary) that emerged in Slovenia in the late 1970s and propagated throughout the federate republics. Given the unique economic history and geopolitical significance of the SFR Yugoslavia, there is a discussion of how anarchism differs in the Yugoslav successor states today (specifically Croatia) from other countries on the European continent. Punk is discussed as an alternative to nationalism and personal stories of anarchist identification are recorded herein.

I decided something just now. I'm sitting here, compiling my interviews, looking over my literature for the final time, and I've made a decision. I'm halfway through the text for my zine and I realize, right at this moment, that I want to *write* this. This wasn't going to be an account. This was going to be something different— something dry. A car with no gas-- you know what the car is for, and you can look at it and appreciate the craftsmanship and the function, but you can't drive it down the highway 30 miles over the limit and really understand what it is capable of, feel that energy flooding your veins as your knuckles go white. That's what this was going to be. A museum exhibit, a presentation of findings. But I was sitting here, compiling, looking, and I made a decision. There's no reason to dry this out-- it can be wet and slippery and can catapult you down the highway. The pages herein can capture the gut feelings of my research, can give me a role in the story I was trying (and hopefully, did) record.

I just decided something else. These pages, or rather what is on them, these accounts and thoughts and recollections— these are history. They happened. But the point of this project, from the beginning, was to keep up the momentum. I want these pages to be a bridge, spanning oceans and time and space.

There are other copies of this project. They are splitting like atoms and depositing themselves in zine libraries. They are finding their way to punk distributions at concerts and festivals. Once they get there, I am not sure what they'll do. But whatever it is, I think it will be important.

These pages are bookends. For the purpose of this project, I need to discuss some things I didn't want to put into the zine. That's what these are. Everything else is within.

BOOKEND 1: LENSES, LENSES, LENSES

I entered into my research, into a community of punks and anarcho-punks, as myself an anarcho-punk. My involvement in the Zagreb Anarcha-Feminist Collective (hereafter referred to as AnFema) itself became my independent study project, not the other way around. This is an important differentiation to make— it impacts my theoretical framework of analyzing my involvement in my research community and it forces me to recognize the lenses I am carrying with myself in my fieldwork.

When I first became involved with Zagreb AnFema, back when it was a way to meet people and not an idea for a research project, one of the first things I did with the group was serve Food Not Bombs. This is a regular street action for anarchists in cities across the world, where vegan food is cooked and served to the general public. But what struck me was how different the way *they* did Food Not Bombs was to how *my* friends do it back home in D.C. This is lens number 1. It's something Patrick Smith calls 'American Triumphalism.' To quote, "Now, as in the 1950s, Americans can be fairly described as lost in their own sense of triumph. Now as then, we— we Americans— look out upon the world and consider it somehow ours to be remade in our own image."¹ I was looking at the people coming up to Glavni Kolodvor, thinking, "This isn't right! Why does this feel so different?" Triumphalism. Like thinking the keyboards here are *wrong* because they are different.

Lens number 2. Maybe this is implied by lens number 1, but I'm American. Wolf again. "Globalization amounts to Americanization ... it's merely a restatement of the West's Cold War notion of human progress: to modernize means to westernize; to

advance you must emulate us.”² That’s a true statement, and there’s a lot of resentment about that. There were the jokes about people not wanting to talk to me because I could be CIA, but there is a kernel of truth behind that. This project culminated in an Anarcha-Feminist Festival with anarchists coming from across East Europe, and the entire thing was held in English. And I was the only person there whose native language was English. The imperialism here is subtle, but apparent. Despite us all being anarchists, believing that nationality is manufactured and borders are a failure on the part of human compassion, the resentment was palpable. Language here presents an issue, as well. Because my Croatian was not up to snuff enough to use the wealth of information written about the history of punk and anarchism in this region, my literature review and preliminary research rests on texts written in English. In a sense, I’m Americanizing my understanding of my research community’s history.³

Oh, and lens number 3. As stated above, I entered into a research community of anarcho-punks as one myself. The fact that I wasn’t born in the former Yugoslavia does provide some distance from my research, as emphasized through lenses 1 and 2, but I do feel affinity with these people. I do see myself in their struggle, see my role in a global movement. And essentially, that is what this project is about— building bridges where academia puts distance. Which brings us to our next sub-section.

‘PUNK RESEARCH METHODOLOGY’ IN PRACTICE

When I was writing proposals for this project I wrote that I would operate with a “punk research methodology,” and after seeing it in practice for a month I think the term still applies.

¹Patrick Smith, “Dark Victory,” Index October 1999: 42

² Ibid.

The idea is that, if I feel affinity with the group I am researching, I should not pretend at academic distance. While I agree with the basic caveat of anthropology that I cannot truly understand a community, or become a member of a community, unless I was born into it, I can *contribute* to this community. Punk research methodology takes the participant/observer approach and attempts to further blur the line between researcher and subject. That's why I wrote my zine in the style that I did; by including myself, I am building more bridges.

The decision to present my findings in the form of a zine instead of a standard research paper also is wrapped up in this 'punk' methodology. By using a phenomenological instrument like a zine, something that emerges *from* the punk community itself, I am contextualizing my research. But the use of the zine was for another purpose as well. I wanted my project to have a function for my research community, or at least the larger anarchist community, outside of my own obvious gains in completing this project. That this zine is immortal, splitting and dividing maybe as you read this, connects Zagreb AnFema with individuals everywhere. It's an affinity mechanism, a way to start thinking outside regional collectives and on a global scale. Obviously, standard academic research is entirely valid and could have offered a valuable methodology for this research. But I wanted to root my project within this community. I wanted my final paper to retain some of the energy I observed in the field.

When I started working with Zagreb AnFema, and the periphery individuals associated with the Collective, I was looking for the roots of anarchist struggle in the former Yugoslavia. What I expected was to find real or imagined connections to the history of punk in the region. And to some extent, I did find this. As my researched

³ Conversation with research mentor, May 4, 2007

progressed, my question changed and I began looking more directly at personal histories of anarchism, how individuals became acquainted with these ideas. And, in this way, I did find very cement connections between subculture and counterculture, a division that my research suggests is easily navigable.

A METHODOLOGY EXPLAINED

I spoke to 8 individuals in a mixture of group and one-on-one interviews. These interviews formed the foundation of my research, but I also included my personal observations and interactions outside of these semi-structured interview periods. The interviews did not follow any formal questionnaire, as I instead preferred to form my questions based on my knowledge of the personal experience of the individual I was speaking to (if they played in a band, if they were from a country entering the EU or already within the EU, their age).

I chose my participants based on their involvement with AnFema, participation in the punk scene, or degree of expertise. The participants come from three of the six Yugoslav successor states—Bosnia-Herzegovina (Federation BiH), Serbia and Croatia. There is a clear bias towards Zagreb, and Croatia in general, in my research. This is because the AnFema Festival occurred in Zagreb, and this is where a majority of my research took place. My participants' comments are meant only to illuminate their own experience, and not speak for the rest of their community. Since I cannot address the roots of anarchist struggle in Macedonia, Montenegro or Slovenia, understand this project to be an examination of the anarchist community in Zagreb with insight from Serbian and Bosnian research participants.

I tried to conduct my interviews in an environment I thought individuals would be most willing to speak about their experience as anarchists— at the three anarchist festivals I went to during the course of my research or in private areas. I tried to make my interviews, as much as I was able, conversations. The point of this was to further my goal of a punk research methodology that bridged the distance between researcher and subject.

The introduction, literature review and my data is presented in the attached zine. Following this is my analysis and discussion of findings, conclusion, appendices and bibliography, which make up the rear bookend to my project.

What follows is the text of my zine. Bookend 2 is heralded with a denoting title.

I've started writing this more times than I can count, and every time it doesn't seem right ('no, no. That's too far into the story.' 'But if you start way back *then*, they won't even know what this is about'). This zine is the product of four months I spent at an NGO school in Croatia, from January to May 2007 (forgive the footnotes, but this zine was submitted in partial fulfillment of my program at that school). Ultimately, I want it to tell three stories: my own recollection of these past four months, the personal stories of the people I came into contact with here, and a history of anarchism in the former Yugoslavia.

Wait a second. This is something I've been thinking about lately. That phrase—"the **FORMER** Yugoslavia"—it's a big problem. I think what fascinates people about this part of the world, myself included, is that it *once was* something. Like somehow it's comforting that the concept of a state is transient, that it can cease existing. The wealth of books written about this region (which is situated between Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece, with a hefty portion of Adriatic Coast) use lots of cataclysmic words in their subtitles—a brief survey of the library I am writing this in offers up such gems as collision, fragmentation, death, destruction. But that term, **FORMER** Yugoslavia, it defines these countries (all six of them) by their past. 12 years after the Dayton Peace Accords ended fighting in Bosnia, these countries aren't basking in their independence—they're nominally reliving the better part of the twentieth century every time someone wants to condense a sentence. My neighbor asked me why journalists always call his home *that*, refusing to even utter the name. But I couldn't think of anything else to call this place by. So let me say now that I use this term throughout this text (even on the title page!), and I wince every time I do it. This is my first apology.

This zine is about a lot of things, and I think it is better to let those present themselves rather than clutter up a pre-introduction with them. But, briefly— it's about a part of the world that enjoyed a geopolitical singularity for the length of the Cold War. But really, it's about the anarchists in this part of the world and the history of their movement. I spent my time in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, but I spoke with anarchists from Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Their stories are at times uplifting and at times tragic, and these are people working hard to change the tide in their countries. I hope I have honored their work.

THERE IS NO INFOSHOP IN ZAGREB.

If Zagreb had an infoshop,⁴ this zine (and my general experience in the former Yugoslavia) would be radically different. First, I doubt it would be about anarchism. Second, it would not include the voices included herein, of people actively resisting global pressures on their states to militarize, capitalize and homogenize. But luckily (at least for me), Zagreb has no infoshop.

It was my fourth night in Croatia, and with the help of a Slingshot,⁵ my friend Jane and I went searching for the address listed in the back of the book for Zagreb's anarchist bookshop. When we finally found the street, after much difficulty reading the street signs (an interesting point of fact about the Croatian language— because of the complicated grammatical structure, the street name that appears on maps is sometimes different than the name that appears on the street signs, so you can imagine our issues as new arrivals in the country), there was no infoshop to be found.

⁴ Infoshops are somewhere between an anarchist reading room and cultural resource center.

⁵ Anarchist organizer and datebook produced by the Slingshot collective of Berkeley, CA.

We were puzzled. Unless the folks at Slingshot Collective had totally dropped the ball and printed the wrong address, Zagreb *did*, as recently as one year prior, have an anarchist bookshop. And where there is a bookshop, one can assume there is a community. What had happened to the anarchists of Zagreb? Did the shop get shut down? Maybe they just fragmented over ideological differences and abandoned the project. Whatever had occurred, we were interested in finding out more. Later that week, as we acclimated to our new environs, we asked a new friend if he knew anything about an anarchist bookshop in town. He gave us the phone number of Tatijana, who was organizing some sort of conference and could probably tell us more about what happened to the infoshop than he could. And this is where our adventure, and my research, begins.

When Jane and I finally found Tatijana, we didn't find an infoshop. But we did find a thriving anarchist community. We found a counterculture that was building its own spaces on the fringe of a culture rapidly preparing itself for EU ascension. We found a collective, AnFema, planning an Anarcha-Feminist festival that we were invited to help put on (this festival is where a majority of this research occurred). We found punks that had found, through anarchism, an escape from the nihilism of a subcultural lifestyle. We found bookfairs, festivals and outreach projects— a movement that refused to be relegated to the underground, that found channels to be visible.

This zine is about finding the source of struggle. Every movement begins somewhere. When tracing the roots of anarchist thought, Joll connects Gnostic sects, the counterculture of the Middle Ages, to the development of a critical anarchist framework in the 18th century. By categorizing the existing world as totally corrupt, unreal and

transient, these Bogomils, Cathars and Tondrakians were rejecting the earthly— that is, social— values structures of dominant culture.⁶

If rejecting the values of the social order can connect two groups as different as medieval Gnostics and early anarchist ideologues, then surely there are many connections between today's anarchist community and the punk subculture of yesterday. In the Yugoslav successor states, this connection is twofold; not only are both communities by nature critical of the same structures (consumer culture, militarism, and police), but they are also groups that exist outside the control of the state. This was the essential question I had when researching the anarchist community in the former Yugoslavia— how is it connected to the punk subculture and why does that connection exist?

This zine attempts to capture three histories: the personal narratives of my research participants and the stories of how they came to be involved in anarchist actions, the wider history of anarchism in the region, and the story of my own involvement in the anarchist community here. In including both the larger story of anarchism in the former Yugoslavia and the personal stories of coming across anarchist philosophy, I hope to highlight the parallels of these histories. And in including my own story, I hope to blur the line between researcher and subject. This zine, like every zine ought to be, is about building bridges, about building connections. While it is paramount to appreciate the uniqueness of the stories included within, I hope that you can learn something from these stories to take into your own life. This is what punk research is about.

⁶ James Joll, The Anarchists (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 1964) 19.

FIRST, SOME CONTEXT

The story of anarchist thought in Yugoslavia begins in 1848. In Prague, the Czech National Committee's Slav Congress has escalated into five days of fighting between the Slav rebels and the Austrian authorities. Mikhail Bakunin, escaping through the Austrian lines, pens his explosive *Appeal to the Slavs* from the Duchy of Anhalt.⁷

“The Revolution, in its omnipotence, declared the dissolution of the States of the despots; the dissolution of the Prussian Empire, which abandoned one of the fragments of Poland; the dissolution of the Empire of Austria, that monster composed of various nations which had been all chained together by ruse, by crime; the dissolution of the Turkish Empire, within which seven million Osmanlis had packed and trampled upon a population of twelve million Slavs, Walachians and Greeks...”⁸

Bakunin's open letter essentially calls for a revolution founded on nationalistic lines, and the establishment of a federative state of all Slavs, based around national borders. It is far from an anarchist text—the nucleus of his ultimatum is to replace one state with another, this time based around manufactured national categories instead of the pre-existing imperialist structure. But, unless we want to take a cue from Joll and trace the roots of anarchism in the former Yugoslavia to the Gnostic Bosnian Church of the 12th century, the larger themes of Bakunin's *Appeal* suggest the birth of an idea in the region. A look at the history of anarchism in the former Yugoslavia following the revolutions of 1848 shows the spread of (nationalist) anarchist thought and movement in the same fashion as Bakunin's contradictory *Appeal*.

⁷George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962) 129.

The best place to start is World War I. Prior to this point there had been a series of anarchist actions, including one Miloš Krpan trying to set up an anarchist commune around Slavonski Brod. But by World War I, the nationalist fervor of Bakunin's *Appeal* had been far surpassed by the rage felt by Bosnian Serbs. With Bosnia under control of the Austrian monarchy since 1908, Bosnian citizens of Serb descent had organized into a radical nationalist group, Mlada Bosna.⁹ Revolutionaries from this group assassinated Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his Consort in 1914 to express their distaste with Vienna's opposition to Serbian expansionism. Nedeljko Čabrinović, one of the revolutionaries, declared during his trial that "his participation in the assassination plot was inspired by anarchist ideas."¹⁰ The fact that Čabrinović and his more successful brother-in-arms, Gavrilo Princip, were Serb nationalists didn't seem to bar him from claiming anarchist inspiration, just as Bakunin's anarchist predilections hadn't kept him from advocating a federative Slav republic. Perhaps more important that Čabrinović's defense is the connection between Mlada Bosna and the Slovenian group Preporod,¹¹ which advocated a south Slavic revolutionary movement. The point here is that, though there was anarchist thought in Yugoslavia before the mid-twentieth century, it was weighed down with nationalist rhetoric.

The federative Slav union that Bakunin volunteered was eventually realized in 1918, with the establishment of the United Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later condensed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).¹² But the internationalist approach that Bakunin would later adopt wasn't part of the dialogue of the Yugoslav worker's

⁸ Bakunin, Mikhail, *Appeal to the Slavs* from Bakunin on Anarchy, NY, USA, 1971

⁹ "Young Bosnia"

¹⁰ Simic, Aleksandar, The Workers' Movement in Serbia and ex-Yugoslavia,

¹¹ "Rebirth"

movement until the Communist Party of Yugoslavia gained a foothold. The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established in 1945, in the political vacuum left by the collapse of various fascist quisling regimes following the defeat of the Third Reich.

FPR Yugoslavia (renamed Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963) established a 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' but only nominally. In reality, all workers organizations, previously bastions of anarcho-syndicalist critique, and all social initiatives were put under control of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The first post-war strike didn't occur until 1958, at the Trbovlje and Hrastnik mines in Slovenia. The strike ended in victory for the workers, but also resulted in further suppression of working class struggle.¹³ Workers found representation through the federate's single legal union, the Trade-Union League of Yugoslavia, which was under strict Party control. With this image of the lack of space for opposition to the model of state capitalism, we can move on to how the arrival of a punk subculture helped to create a space for resistance.

AND THEN CAME PUNK

Where the SFR Yugoslavia limited the actions of the worker's struggle, there was a relatively high level of freedom of expression for rock musicians— at least compared to the repressive policies in Czechoslovakia, Albania and the USSR. And, in tolerating rock music, the Yugoslav elites were able to absorb the musicians into replicating Party ideology.¹⁴ That is, until the prog-rock scene of the early seventies gave way to the booming punk scene that would be a thorn in Belgrade's side.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ramet, Sabrina Petra, Balkan Babel, Boulder, Colorado, 1996. p. 95

Punk rock differed from Yugo-Rock partly because of the music itself— “it was purposefully standardized, simplistic ... populist (folk music of the desperate, angry urban youths), unpretentious (short songs with an immediate message) and democratic.”¹⁵ But the audience was also a marker for the Party elite to treat punk differently. The subculture that formed around punk music led to graffiti and youth less willing to follow the directives of authority figures.¹⁶ The values of the punk subculture ran contrary to the Yugoslav hegemon: devaluation of values, individualism, anarchism, realism and living for the moment.¹⁷ And, as such, it quick became a target for the authorities. Police repression of the punk movement began in 1980-81, and this victimized status only lent credibility to the youth subculture.¹⁸ The press labeled the punks as fascists or as counterrevolutionaries. But in an interesting turn of events, the League of Socialist Youth in Slovenia supported their base. Such was the beginning of the end of rigid party control, and maybe even the beginning of the divide between the Northern and Southern republics that would lead to war and secession in the 1990s.

A counterculture is a union of a subculture and a subpolitical culture. In referring to an anarcho-punk counterculture in the Yugoslav successor states, we can recognize a union of these two historic communities. On the one hand, a subpolitical anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist critique, and on the other a disaffected subculture. Counterculture is defined by Roszak as a “youth movement in which both subcultural and subpolitical considerations are prominent sources of orientation in the social life of their members.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Tomc. Gregor, *Sociology of Punk under Socialism*

¹⁶ Tomc, Gregor, *The Politics of Punk* from Independent Slovenia, NY, NY, 1994. p. 116

¹⁷ Tomc. Gregor, *Sociology of Punk under Socialism*

¹⁸ Mastnak, Tomaž, *From Social Movements to National Sovereignty* from Independent Slovenia NY, NY, 1994. p. 94

¹⁹ ¹⁹ Tomc, Gregor, *The Politics of Punk* from Independent Slovenia, NY, NY, 1994. p. 114

The voices that follow come from within this counterculture— voices speaking from somewhere in between the punk of yesterday and the anarchism of today. From their experiences, we can find their own personal roots of struggle.

THE SQUAT

Zagreb's only squat is not easy to find. Getting off the tram at the right stop is only the beginning of the adventure— after that, there's the trouble of locating the correct street (“Is this the right tobacco stand?” “All these pharmacies look the same”), the right overgrown driveway, and then, like Brigadoon, it emerges from the mist. The building is beautiful— a friend of mine once described it as her very own fairy tale castle, save the graffiti. But then, I've only ever seen it at night.

The first time I went to the squat was that first night with Tatijana. Jane and I had contacted her a few days before, and she said she was having “a squat” and that we should come. This was my first blunder with miscommunication. It would be followed by accidentally eating blood sausage and telling my host mother here that my brother was not married when she asked me if I needed to do my laundry. But the point is, I thought Tatijana meant that she was having some kind of meeting, and that she was translating that into English as “a squat.” Whether we misheard her or what, I'll never know, but my friend and I weren't expecting to be taken to the squat that night. When we arrived, the community felt warm and welcoming. The place itself was a mess, because neighbors come and put their trash in the yard.

I found out later that the place was owned by a convicted war criminal, a guy who isn't allowed to enter Croatian territory. As a result, his house, the squat, became a relic and was abandoned. People lived there for a while, but there's no electricity so now the

place is just used for DIY shows and parties. That first night was a party—a fundraiser for an anarchy-feminist festival that we were invited to help with. It was at one of those planning meetings that Jane and I got an offer to head to Rijeka, a port town on Croatia's northern Adriatic Coast, for an anarchist bookfair and conference.

SUNČANA- STARTING FROM YEAR ZERO.

We're in Rijeka for this bookfair, Tranzicija, and tomorrow Sunčana will present the Anarchy-Feminist Festival. I think we're all excited because presenting it, actually standing up in front of a crowd of people and saying "This will happen at this time in this place" makes things seem a lot more real than sitting in a circle going over and over the same topics without getting anywhere. Like, by presenting the festival, she's doing more to get the festival underway than reserving space or working out visas. It's a promise to a group—it's saying the thing you've been working so hard on is real and concrete and fixed in time and space. I think my question kills the mood.

"What does anarchism mean to you?"

"That's a big question," she answers, stunned but far from at a loss. "Anarchism means an awful lot. At one point it intrigued me so much that I decided to give the most of myself to this idea. I won't say my whole life, but a lot. Because that is the idea I felt before I even heard this word. I was always something like an outsider, and I recognized that in this idea were my feelings, that this has a name, which is anarchism. And then I met people connected to this music, like punk and hardcore music and I read the lyrics and everything, and I was surprised to find out that so many people like me exist, that I was not so much an outsider as I thought."

And then she's taking my question, this big question of "where does this struggle come from?" and she's running with it. She's giving me a personal history of the Croatian anarchist movement.

"In Croatia the scene is not so old. The punk movement, the same as the anarchist movement, does not have a big tradition in this area— not just in Croatia but in all of Yugoslavia. Not in this sense of DIY punk. But this anarchist idea started to develop somewhere in the early 1990s, during the war period in Croatia. Partially it started from people opposing the war, opposing this artificial nationality that was being enforced by the media. Anarchist activism started as peace activism. I could say that the point in which this anarchist activism was the highest was early 2000-2003. These were the golden years. There were more and more young people that connected and formed some sort of a movement. Considering the fact that we did not have a tradition in the last twenty years, I would say that this was very strong. There were anarchists, in the sense of more traditional anarchist ideas, in the beginning of twentieth century. We found recordings of people who ended up in jail for opposing the system. It is not like there was never anarchism in this area, but it was such a long time ago and such a different sort of anarchism that we felt like starting from zero. In early 2000 there was a lot of demonstrations and some direct action considering topics like anti-NATO demos and anti-European Union. We felt not like we were doing something isolated, but we felt a part of something bigger— part of the anti-globalization processes around the world that had started in Seattle. After these few years of intense activism this core of people started to split up. One of the reasons was that the police and authorities in the beginning didn't have a clue how to react. So in time they got the education on how to deal with people

that are political activists. So they also learned together with us how to act. At that time it was pretty expensive to be activists. Because they charge you money.”

Wait. Activist taxes? “What do they charge you for?”

“For disturbing public order, for non-legal gathering. They found ways to stop us, because we ran out of people who were willing to sacrifice themselves to the police. Little by little we ran out of the people that were serious, these few individuals who would turn into the usual victims. This was a totally stupid position, to go from activist to victim-in-charge. So all the reasons why we were doing that got lost, and all the bad experiences were too much. In the end it was only a few individuals doing everything and taking all the responsibility for it, and then you realize that it is not a movement anymore. A few anarchists you can say is an anarchist core, but you cannot call it a movement. For me the good thing is that those times existed. You could say that we have experience from it, but also that the end was not such a happy end. Today, we learned that the political situation changed. It became more and more clear that there is no way to avoid going into European Union or joining NATO. We can try, but today it is more obvious than in 2000 that it will probably happen. Starting from this point, you wonder, is it worth it? When half of the people coming to the demonstrations don’t even know what are the reasons against joining NATO? No matter what we do or try to inform? Today it is a more educational approach. People that do Food Not Bombs spread literature about what those reasons are— not for people within the movement, but for passers-by, for ordinary people. The final goal is to call out for a referendum about it. According to some public questionnaires, for now it is a pretty good chance that most Croatians don’t want to join the EU.”

I ask her what her reasons are against EU membership.

“Today we see that Croatia has nothing to offer as a full EU member,” Sunčana says. “It will just be a puppet, like a marionette. It is totally just economics and marketing and politics. It is going to be a marionette in the hands of the basic countries of the EU. No matter if there are leftists or rightists in the government, their policies do not change. They all dance what the EU commands. So for us today it is like, whatever, because you can’t see the differences. I see how it goes and today, the reasons are not important because it will happen no matter what I think. Nobody will ask me, and people think it will be much better economically. The debt per person in the country is so big that everybody hopes that it will be better when we enter the EU, but for me I think that is illusion. The economic reality I think is that it will probably be even worse. The prices will get higher, the salaries will stay the same.”

I wonder how EU ascension will affect anarchist actions here. Will it make it more difficult or will laws be more liberal regarding these sorts of protests? Sunčana foresees a grim future.

“This movement in EU, what happens there, it is also our future. And it is not bright. Everything is like this capitalism; it eats everything. Today you can see it, at this fair. It is a book fair. No one is buying brochures or books. They are buying more fashionable things— t-shirts, patches. I think the scene is becoming more of a fashion thing than the real, politically radical thing. And that is something that is already going on. I don’t know if it is a generational thing. My generation, we lived in socialism, we felt the transition, and now we are living in capitalism. That is a period of just twenty years! And this new generation? They were born during the war. They don’t remember the

transition period and now, with this forced democracy and capitalism, they are raised in a society that is totally based on consumerism. So they are much more thinking in that way and acting that way. And that process is getting worse and worse. I think the situation before was better, concerning this mentality, than today.”

Sunčana plays guitar in a hardcore band with two other folks from AnFema, the collective planning the festival. I ask Sunčana how she thinks, as someone who plays in a punk band (they’re called Evazija²⁰), anarchism finds a home within this musical subculture.

“Without lyrics that talk about these ideas and topics, I don’t think I would be into this music,” says Sunčana of punk and hardcore. “This music talks about the things which activism does, too. A big and important part of this scene is talking about these social topics, these criticisms of capitalism and patriarchy. So I think it is very much connected. All these bands that had something to say, they said it, probably from their personal thinking, which came from individuality and being conscious of all these problems. For me personally, this punk/hardcore music is the only music that I can accept, because I think what they talk about is really important. I could never listen to just electronica music, without thinking about what it represent, where it’s consumed and in which way, and who produced it— these big record labels. What we do as Evazija, I think it’s totally connected to our ideas and our lives. It is not just a band, it is much more.”

The problem with nationalism here is huge. The war has been over for better than a decade in Croatia. I’m not sure if that is a long time or a short time. It’s like, coming from where I come from, I have absolutely no perspective about something like that. But

²⁰ It’s a cognate- Evasion. There’s a novel from an anarchist publisher, Crimethinc., of the same name. When I asked “Like the book?” Sunčana said she gets that a lot. Whoops.

I feel like punk, at its best, should be an answer to this problem. That through punk people should find some kind of working alternative to the dominant identity categories imposed by their governments from above— you are Serb, you are Croat, you are Bosnian-Muslim, you are Albanian. Sunčana bursts my bubble.

“Theory is one thing, reality is another,” she chides. “We had cases when we were burning flags at punk gigs. It was OK when we were burning, for instance, an American flag. But then we started burning a Croatian flag. When you spit on nationalism, you should start by spitting on your own. So when we were burning this flag, the people, these punk people that were clapping when the American flag was burning, they started throwing stones. That is reality. It happens. In theory, punk is an alternative to nationalism. And anarchism too. All those people would call themselves as punks, same as homophobic person will wear here an antifascist t-shirt. And when you say to him that that is a total contradiction, he says, ‘no, no, antifascism is against skinheads, against Naziism.’ And you say, ‘no, inform yourself please.’ So that is the reality part. But you will always have not enough informed and conscious people. You will never have 100%. That is the reality.”

We start talking about the conference, about what that term ‘anarcha-feminism’ means to Sunčana specifically.

“It connects both of, for me, the best ideas,” she explains. “Not only political but also in general: feminism and anarchism. And whatever is wrong with feminism, anarchism fills it. All the gaps you have, that is where anarchism fits into it. And with the gaps you have in anarchism, feminism fills it. They combine to something for me that is the closest thing that I can call ideal. My criticism of feminism is trying to involve more

and more women into politics. This for me is not a solution because women will play with the existing rules, leaning more and more towards capitalism and oppression of the state. What anarchism gives is that we don't need a state! That is a solution where I don't agree with feminism. But on the other hand people who are supposed to be anarchist, not having a sexist attitude, in practice it is really often happening.²¹ That is where feminism comes in, breaking these gender stereotypes. They combine to something that I think is the best. And this discussion of what anarchy-feminism is for us, this is one of the main purposes of this festival. We want to see what this idea is for these groups, for these individuals. To talk about it— not to define it. I don't think that is possible, to say that anarchy-feminism is this and this. We want to see what are the options, what are these directions. We also want to try and show this idea, to present it and question it to our local community. We expect normal people from the community to come and ask questions if they don't understand.”

Sunčana would present the festival the next afternoon. And, six weeks later it would go up— without so much as a hitch. We didn't know then what to expect, or if her hopes and goals for the festival would actually be realized. Looking back, I like to think that they were. I remember one of the workshops, a big discussion about anarchy-feminist separatist groups.²² People were talking and sharing ideas and of course we didn't reach a consensus about whether the model works— but then, that wasn't really the point of the discussion. Like Sunčana told me in Rijeka, this idea isn't about reaching definitions. It's

²¹ The recurring issue of 'manarchism.' Women relegated to actions like Food Not Bombs, etc., while men are in the streets for potentially violent actions. I learned here that this is a major problem in Greece, with the student occupation movement.

²² Separatism means the forming of autonomous women's spaces, or working groups that exclude men. This is a hotly debated topic in feminist circles, and perhaps even more so in anarchy-feminist critiques, because it reinforces the gender differences imposed by society. AnFema is not a separatist group.

about looking at all the directions and options that an idea like anarchy-feminism (or for that matter, anarchism itself) can aid in the struggle of everyday life. I believe that the festival accomplished this discussion, if anything.

SRDJAN- A MONOLOGUE

I'm in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia and once the federal capital of the SFR Yugoslavia. Srdjan is a researcher at an ethnographic institute. I'd heard him speak the day before about turbo-folk's implications as an instrument of nationalism.²³ I wanted to talk to him about the historical context of punk (specifically anarcho-punk) in the region. His analysis is best presented as the monologue that follows—

“Punk as a movement had political and social influence only in Slovenia in the 1980s. The situation in late socialism in Yugoslavia was very specific on cultural and social issues. Socialist elites were more or less positive about all rock music in the former Yugoslavia. They looked at it like, ‘oh! The kids are having fun.’ When the punk scene arose in Britain, the subculture was a movement of working class kids. In the former Yugoslavia it was totally the opposite situation— we have high middle-class and high-class kids in the punk scene. It was not so much rebellion, in the sense that punk is thought of and represented in Britain. It was a subcultural movement for most. It was... something different. New stylings. They got the messages of punk in general. It wasn't something they were thinking would change the society they were living in. Especially in Serbia. You had that kind of situation in Slovenia- the development of a civil network. Ljubljana is not a big city. Different subcultural, independent opposition groups could network and do something. In Belgrade, and in a way in Zagreb as well, punk wasn't that

huge. New wave was huge in Yugoslavia. Punk wasn't that big. Of course new wave had some heritage in punk, but it was a massively produced, massively consumed lifestyle. You have social bases of punk listeners in Serbia and Croatia, but the social bases are totally different than the United Kingdom. You don't have working class kids, which see that as at least a manifest rebellion. Punkers from my generation, people who are now 30 and were 15 or 16 when I knew them, none of them were below the average income in Belgrade. On the contrary— most of them were from downtown Belgrade. So you have totally different social backgrounds of punk musicians and audiences. We are talking about late socialism. It had that impact in Slovenia for the sole reason that they were very well netted with other social groups. It's like if you'd compare India to the Netherlands. Slovenia was like no other socialist country in the world. In some ways it was more liberal than some capitalist Western European countries. Compare Amsterdam and Beijing— that is the difference between Slovenia and Serbia in the 1980s. The whole Ljubljana scene in the 1980s context can't be compared to the rest of Yugoslavia. In the late 90s, punk went into several directions in Serbia. Most of the bands went very right wing. Oi was huge in Belgrade in the 1990s, especially Nazi Oi. They just imported it, mixed in some local narratives or mythology. A great deal of punkers went in this direction. The punk movement was virtually dead in 1993. Once punkers saw that they were outsiders in every sense, and had lost any kind of status among other cultural groups in Belgrade, they said, 'this shit doesn't work.' So in 1993 that thing was over. You had right wing punkers, but there were no official or big bands. Musical production in the 1990s in Serbia was mostly demo tapes. Old new wave bands trying to record something,

²³ To get an idea for what turbo-folk is, imagine traditional Serbian (or Bosnian, or Croatian) folk songs backed by an overproduced techno beat. Hideous to imagine, more chilling to hear.

but finding less and less of an audience. Most of the urban crowd immigrated to foreign lands to escape the draft. There was a demographic downfall for new wave and punk audiences. It was a social thing, people wanted to say they were different than the mainstream dominant scene. That's how punk appealed to them in the 1990s. Then came 1996, 1997. We had huge rallies against Milosevic here. There were elections and the opposition won, but Milosevic tried to cover the facts. Everything sparked- among other things, musical things. At last we had some bands, new wave and punk bands, emerging. Most of these were the ones that existed before, but they were totally suppressed with the depression and everything. The basic problem was the media in Serbia. Mainstream pop was allowed and of course was heavily marketed and present in the media. Neofolk had been very popular, but ruling elites thought of it as indecent, not progressive. Communist elites were modernist elites, whatever we may think of them. They were smart people and knew that going back to your roots isn't a good thing. Those neofolk musical production houses weren't as welcome in the media, at least on nationally broadcasted media. You had a media system that encouraged civilized, modern rock and pop. It was heavily marketed, on state-owned media. But Serbia thought punk was right wing, and it was too progressive for the government and for the public, as well. In Serbia, we don't have a large left nowadays. Many of people who are left-oriented tend to go to anarchist groups, anarchist political cells. The left wing punk wasn't as prominent as right wing punk was in the 1990s, so we are not talking about some massive influx of punks into anarchist groups. Anarchist groups here in Serbia are quite heterogeneous, where mostly they work on the cultural rather than political level. There are some punkers in these groups, but they are never leading these groups, no matter how affiliated they are. Punk doesn't have

a strong hold as it might in other countries solely because it didn't have a foothold in the 1990s. Anarchism in transitional countries is more or less a toy thing than real initiatives or actions. You live in a different type of system. Transitional countries are very strange. Everybody stands to one thing that is being done in totally different ways. Anarchism, something that by the book is offering alternatives that are totally opposite to what this country is going toward, therefore it is more than the question of style or cultural affiliation than politics. Many people, who feel resentment to capitalism or consumption culture, end up in anarchism because that's the nearest thing on the left that they can get. It's attracting people with different motives. Anarcho-punks aren't a vital part here, as much as they would be in Germany or some country with a different political system and not in this transitional phase."

"EVERY POLITICIAN IS NATIONALIST"

Alisa is the only one at the Anarcha-Feminist Festival from Bosnia (she lives in Sarajevo). She had friends who wanted to come, but couldn't. We're sitting outside, and lunch is being served but she is gracious enough to fend off the hunger to talk to me about her experiences. She's just finished telling me this long story about an NGO and anarchist group in Mostar that were working together to have an abandoned building be turned over to the community. When the city authorities finally did hand the building over, the NGO just took the place, leaving the anarchists on the street.

"So in Bosnia, NGOs and anarchists groups are really hating each other," she's saying. "I'm on both sides. I am in this anarchist group and dealing with one NGO, a feminist activist group."

Her story gives me a better picture of the why people are so surprised to hear that I am studying at an NGO school here. Like they wouldn't allow me in, or I would refuse to go, or something.

“The scene in Bosnia for punk and hardcore is really bad,” she continues. “Most of those people are so young and totally into nationalism and patriotism and all of that. They are angry, and hate almost everybody that comes from Serbia because of the war. They don't understand anything. In Sarajevo it is pretty awful. You have so many bands, and they are all so sexist and homophobic. The scene is pretty bad. I am so destroyed when I come here and see all of this, and know that tomorrow I have to go back home.”

It's an awful story. I tell her that one of the other things I was interested in is if punk could be an alternative to nationalism here.

“It should be,” she agrees. “It should be an alternative! In Sarajevo you have those kids who are totally Nazi shits. We even have one band that does a Nazi salute at the start of their show. It is awful. There are so many people into that. That is the main problem in Bosnia.”

I was in Bosnia, maybe a month before. In Mostar I saw three UNPROFOR jeeps, and was really surprised. The International Community, capitals intended, is still heavily involved in the day-to-day activities in the country. I ask her what kind of problems this presents.

“We had this new election, and the government formed and the International Community said ‘no, they cannot be like that, do it again.’

“Because they elected nationalist politicians?”

“In Bosnia, every politician is nationalist. There is no left wing, no right or left or center. It is all totally radical. The situation is really bad. You have so many levels of government in Bosnia. There are like, 11 governments. You have 2 entities. So much bureaucracy, so much administration. That is helping the people who have the power, because they are fighting all the time. You must have in every situation a representative of Muslims, of Serbs and of Croatians. They are always fighting, and it is camouflage for not doing anything. People are so occupied by that. I have to resist 11 systems!”

I ask her if it was different during the war, if there was an active anarchist movement.

“No, nothing like that. People who thought like that ran away from Bosnia,” she responds. Her choice of words is interesting. “You had that situation where a lot of people from other countries are coming here, to Bosnia, to say no to war and all that stuff, but local people didn’t do any actions. At least I don’t know. For example during the war, this guy did the show ‘Hair.’ That was an anti-militaristic thing. During the war with candles and all this stuff. There was a culture opposing the war, but not an anarchist one.”

I ask her how Yugoslav communism affects anarchism today. Does she think it is different than in West European countries?

“The people I know are mostly anarchist who are pro-communism,” she replies. We’re both laughing. “It is pretty funny. It is different. But it is not bad, I suppose. It is easier to organize because everybody worked together under communism. But the communism here wasn’t really communism. The idea of communism is pretty close to anarchism. But in Russia or here or in East Europe, the communism never fulfilled its ideas.”

I'm still trying to wrap my head around her initial response.

“So you're saying you know anarchists who think fondly of the Partisans?”

“You have that situation. ‘Tito, please come back, we need you now.’ They are so convinced that one man can join them all again. Everybody is saying that, even anarchists. Even though most of them really suffered during communism. Anarcho-syndicalism is very popular.” The smell of the rice and beans is carrying over to our part of the courtyard and we're both getting fussy. I wrap it up with my main question.

“Were you a punk before you were an anarchist?”

“I was,” she says. “Everybody was. And I still am! They support each other very well, these ideas. They are kind of one for me. Punk is all about fighting oppression, and the same as anarchism. It is a strong message. Fighting for a better society. Punk is all about that. Not all of it, but it should be.”

VASELINE CHILDREN- *EYES TO THE FUTURE*

“Sve što vidiš ovdje nije

Slijepo prihvaćaš, uzimaš i gutaš”

-Vaseline Children, *Svi ćete umrijeti*

I'm sitting in the workshop room at the AnFema festival with Zhbla, Kiki, Gajo and Cane. If Cane brings to mind a lone ranger protecting pioneers against marauding horse thieves and not a traditional Croatian name, fear not your instinct. These are stage names. These four guys play in Vaseline Children, a straight edge hardcore band based in Zagreb. I first met them in Rijeka at the Tranzicija Festival, where we talked, as our conversation is turning now, about Boston hardcore.

“So you guys have never heard of FSU?” I'm saying.

“No, no,” responds Kiki. I just met him yesterday. We spent the entire morning talking about politics here, in the States, how he got his nickname (affectionately, it’s ‘peanut’).

“It means Fuck Shit Up, or Friends Stand United. They’re a straight edge crew. Nasty dudes. They like to fight.”

“Macho guys. We have that problem here as well,” says Zhbla, filling in the blanks. But the tape recorder is running, so I start asking questions.

“I guess I should start with a basic one. Do you all consider yourselves anarchists?”

Cane doesn’t. Kiki says he is a huge fan. Zhbla considers himself an anarchist, likes the culture, the ideals. Gajo is a supporter.

“I support all of the activities, and I think all of us in the punk scene in Croatia have similar views how life should be, how the system should work. For myself, I have never...”

“You don’t see yourself in it,” offers Kiki.

“Yea, I don’t see myself in it.”

They say they all found anarchism through punk. I ask them to describe that first encounter, and Zhbla waxes poetic.

“The first time you listen to punk, like 14 years old, and you hear stuff like the Sex Pistols, you come in contact first with that stuff, like anarchist imagery, ‘Smash the State,’ things like this. And later on you start discovering more and more political bands, you evolve with their ideas and lyrics. And then come the zines, mostly with anarchist ideas. That’s the progress of the punk listener.”

“Definitely through zines. Before, when I just listened to music, I hadn’t thought about anarchism. I didn’t recognize it in music. But then I saw zines,” says Gajo.

“At the beginning, I thought of myself that I am left-wing,” says Kiki, “that I had left wing views on the world and politics. But as time was passing and I was more deeper into the DIY scene, through music, fanzines, books, communications and people, I was somehow connected to the anarchist way of thinking.”

I ask them if the hardcore scene here is different than twenty years ago, before the war.

“Definitely,” Zhbla says. “I’d say it was a specific time and place when Yugoslavia was a state as a whole. It was another time. It was the 80s and socialism was something completely different. And especially since we had a war separating all the states, it made the people change.”

“You could travel easily,” adds Gajo. “There were no borders.”

“It was definitely a different time,” says Zhbla.

I ask how the Yugoslav economic model influenced the lyrics of those early DIY bands.

“That can be heard in every Yugoslav punk band from the 80s. They were more sarcastic, but criticizing the socialist system.” Zhbla again.

“Society was more militaristic,” says Kiki.

“You stood out with your punk looks and way of thinking in the socialist regime, more than now,” says Zhbla.

I ask about the connections between punks and anarchists here.

“Here it is more or less the same thing,” confirms Zhbla. “The punks are also somehow involved in anarchism. And more or less all the people involved in the anarchist scene now, who are not punk, were punk before. I don’t know, maybe there are more people who are anarchists and not punks who came from the ‘eco’ scene, but mainly it is connected through punk.”

“People who were, in the beginning, like in the 90s, in punk bands,” says Cane, “they were doing something like anarchist newspapers.”

“There was a lot stronger anarcho-punk scene then, than now,” Zhbla adds. “In the 90s. Today, there are a lot of hardcore punk people who support the idea. But earlier it was just a bigger scene.”

“Why’d things change?” I ask.

“Musical trends, everything that comes with it,” Zhbla says. “Internet, fashion.”

“I think also the war has a connection with it,” says Kiki.

“Definitely because of the stronger nationalism.” Gajo’s diagnosis.

“Yea, the DIY scene was like, an answer to that. Forming a strong anarchist scene,” says Kiki, agreeing.

“In the 90s there were more connections between Croat and Serb anarcho-punks,” remembers Zhbla. “They were together against the war. It was a strong scene.”

So now, without the war to connect them, the scenes aren’t as strong. There is this 7-inch record I have been told about on more than one occasion. It came out during the war, maybe 1994. *Behind the Walls of Nationalism*. It’s a split between 5 or 6 Macedonian, Serbian and Croatian anarcho-punk bands. But the possibility of something like that today?

“Definitely not.”

“Not like it was...”

“There’s less people...”

“There’s less people, right,” confirms Zhbla. “There’s less people doing something connected with anarchism. Now you have this commodity, you have now a punk scene and you can just play in a band or do something like that, or you can do something with anarchism. And earlier it was all just one thing and everybody did it together.”

I ask if they can see a divide in their audience when they play, between normal punks and anarcho-punks. They say the situation is much worse in Serbia.

“In the main scene in Belgrade, there are 3 hardcore punk scenes- the hardcore scene, the anarchopunk scene, and then something more trendy,” says Cane.

How could something like that happen in Croatia?

“I think that there are too many people,” says Kiki. “You have so many people and they just divide. We are here in smaller groups, and we have to be together in some way.”

Zhbla disagrees. “But I think that it is happening. You have a more trendy, non-political part of the scene, and the more DIY political scene. But people still come to both shows, say hello to each other. In the future, maybe there will be 2 scenes. And maybe that is better, because I don’t especially want to mix with people with those attitudes. Better to keep this DIY scene concentrated in smaller amounts. We can do things better, with more quality, if we don’t mix with a macho trendy crowd that just wants to play music.”

“Or get drunk!” concludes Kiki.

“I think that is a thing specific to any hardcore punk scene in the whole world,” says Zbhla. “You always have this division of people who really do something and people who are just passive bystanders. That’s it.”

Later, I asked Kiki what he thought about my research question— about the source of anarchist struggle here. His response really opened my eyes.

“I don’t know why I should know the answer to this question. I am looking from my view, from now, what can I do with my life and how. It is not so important to me what was before. To me it is important what is now and what is the future.”

TATIJANA- THIS IS A YOUNG MOVEMENT

Tatijana and I are at Studentski Centar, a kind-of youth cultural facility for Zagreb’s university students, for a film festival— 16 Days of Croatian Film. The one this evening was a documentary about job discrimination in Croatia for differently-abled people, the LGBT community and HIV-positive individuals. I’m feeling a little disheartened— it’s like everything I learn here is about the problems the country is facing. Our conversation now isn’t helping.

“Anarchism is connected to punk and mostly I see that as a problem,” says Tatijana. “And are people are starting to see it as a problem, too. The only music connected to anarchism here is punk, all directions of punk— hardcore, crust or whatever. The other musical genres are not so much involved. There are no bands that are hip-hop anarchists or anything like that. Those people are totally engaged in other stuff— nothing political and nothing connected to anarchism. I am starting to see this is something that is more and more annoying— something that is a really big problem. Only

the people who are in punk bands or into this scene are the ones that start to be interested in anarchism. And the other people, even those who are interested in these ideas, are not going to call it anarchism because that is something they are not supposed to do. That is something only related to punks. This is the perception. All these people that I work with now, they all listen to punk. I don't think anarchism is only that, of course. I also listen to jazz and all types of music. I just play hardcore because I like this the most.

Unfortunately, if I didn't listen to punk, I probably never would have met anarchists.

Maybe I would but they wouldn't call themselves anarchists. Unfortunately, here it is like that. But it is changing, really it is changing.”

Tatijana keeps a blog, and a recent post about an anti-fascist festival in Romania garnered a cruel response. The (anonymous) commenter wrote that anarchism is a closed ghetto here, one that doesn't accept people that listen to other sorts of music because everything that is related to punk is connected to anarchism and vice versa, and as such the community is closed— exclusive. A similar critic blasted the Anarcha-Feminist Festival as an anarcho-punk ghetto on an Internet fanzine.

“I understand why he sees it like that, but also I don't know him,” Tatijana says. “People from these other groups should get involved. These things are starting here now, these things with accepting people that listen to hip-hop and rap, saying that they are also anarchists and can do stuff with us. This is a really childish attitude. It should be like that from the beginning. But our scene, and the anarchist scene here, is still really developing. It is much different in France for example, because they have anarchists that are 80 years old or have bands that play jazz and are anarchists. That's why here it is closed, and it is

not so close to people. Many people do not even understand anarchism because they see it as a very closed thing.”

This is the root question, isn't it? Why? Why is the situation different here in Croatia? Tatijana offers the obvious answer.

“We are still learning about many things. These things are just starting here. They have a big history of punk and anarchist movements. Croatia was more closed— we did not have communism, but let's say social communism, and Yugoslavia was more closed then. During the war it was really hard and nationalism was much stronger than today. France had more of a chance to open. Here people didn't have a chance to squat. There were no people coming here. I think in France, everyone was going there. People were going and getting to know anarchism. Comparing to a situation France, Croatia is like a child that is developing. That is why after the war, everything started then. Before, there was not so much. When the war started, the anarchist movement started to be more engaged. It was in a way some kind of necessity. I think it started more in the 70s and 80s, but not really that you could say, 'ok, this is the anarchist movement.' During the war, it started to be more with protests and people started to see it was urgent to do something.”

I'm wondering why there was a delay, why it took the war for people to start organizing under an idea like anarchism. Were there restrictions by the government in Belgrade for public protest?

“No, no. Yugoslavia didn't prohibit anarchist organizing. We didn't really have communism.²⁴ You cant even compare it to something like Romanian communism. It

²⁴ The economic model in Yugoslavia was closer to a 'market socialism' than a Soviet-style communism seen in the rest of the Eastern Bloc.

was a free country. You could do whatever you wanted. OK, there wasn't total free speech or something like that. But I think you were free. I could wear whatever I wanted to, I could listen to whatever music I wanted to. But I think you would have more problems if you went on the street and they caught you writing something against the state. Then I was really little, and the anarchist movement didn't exist then really. They didn't prohibit things, but it was not so free. It wasn't really possible to have an anarcho-bookfair or something like that. You could do it— but to do it legally, I don't think so.

I remember Alisa's comment about how there is a sense among anarchists here of Yugo-nostalgia. I see it with the older generations, which maybe lost something with the collapse of Yugoslavia. But I hadn't expected to find it amongst young people engaged in anti-authoritarian actions. I ask Tatijana if she remembers those times fondly.

“ I don't look at any regime fondly,” she answers. “It had a lot of minuses and pluses, like democracy does. I think that some things, like social care, was in a way better because everybody it. Schools were free, not totally but mostly. It was easy to get a job. But the other things were worse. You could never get a job as an invalid. Communism was like that. If you could work you were acceptable. If you could not work, you were not. That was communist propaganda. You could end up in jail for saying you didn't like Yugoslavia. There is more free speech today. Capitalism and the stuff that capitalism brought is much worse. Then it wasn't necessary to finish college. You could get a job just for finishing high school. My parents lived better then, and didn't work so much. These are things that are the same everywhere. Things were better in Yugoslavia, but many things weren't as free as they are now.”

And what about police interfering with anarchist activities? Tatijana had told me about the trouble in Romania, where some of her friends are from. Police are always around at festivals and asking for people's papers. Here, the only time I had a run-in with the police was when someone was drunk in public. Even then, he just told us to move.

“Some things are working. If this wouldn't be a democracy, of course you will forbid the anarchist movement, anarchist concerts, anarchist festivals,” answers Tatijana. “But if they are trying to build a democracy, they are not allowed to forbid these things, by law. In Romania, as much as I know, it is forbidden to wear the anarchist symbol because it is something against the state. But the anarchist movement is against the state! And it works in all countries. I see this as surprising that it is so accepted here. People from the Czech Republic were here last year. Their country is more developed than Croatia, but they said they don't accept anarchism. They would be able to have an anarchist festival, but there would be police. They couldn't believe we had an anarcho-bookfair on the main square!”

Tatijana first heard about anarchism when she was 14 or 15, when she started going to punk shows.

“When I started getting to know anarchism, I didn't realize that I was in some ways an anarchist. I was against this, this and that, and I didn't approve this, this and that. I just didn't know that this could be called anarchism. But I think calling yourself an anarchist... I like to avoid it. There are no rules. There are some basic rules, but it is not like 'I am this, this and that.' It is lots of things, lots of combined things.

She also sings for Evazija with Sunčana. I ask Tatijana how her politics come into the writing process.

“These things are very connected, but I don’t like to call it politics,” answers Tatijana. “That sounds so official. These are our ideas. We express ourselves through these songs, anything that is in our mind. Sometimes when I am on the stage at a concert, I realize that everything I want I can say, and everyone there will hear what I want to say. Not through pressuring people into listening, but through the music. At this last concert there was this girl, a friend, who didn’t know I was going to play. She is into totally other stuff, but she said that she really liked the things I was saying. When I say things I just say my opinion, and I don’t expect people to accept it. If you don’t get to people, at least you get to yourself. You express yourself— all your rage, all your opinions, everything is in that song. When you sing you say stuff that you want, but through your movement you also express what you want. Like total rage! I was singing this one song, about judging, and in that moment I was really singing and expressing my rage, like I was talking to a person saying, ‘who are you to judge me, to tell me how I am supposed to think?’”

When I saw Evazija, I couldn’t believe Tatijana. She’s usually pretty soft-spoken, but on stage it’s like she just lets loose. She looked so *powerful* on stage, like with her music she was challenging all these structures she opposes. It was, without a doubt, the most hardcore thing I had ever seen.

I tell Tatijana that I am amazed at how connected everyone in this scene is, like it is a real thriving community. I see the same people at all the concerts, the festivals. And what’s more, they all support each other. What I see as strength, Tatijana sees as an obstacle.

“There is also fragmentation here. Our groups are smaller, our movements are smaller, so you don’t see divisions so much. People are communicating, though. We are

forced in a way because of our size. If there were 1000 people here doing this stuff, there would be more groups and less possibility to work with everyone. But here you work all together as we do because there are not so many people.”

BOOKEND 2

Analysis, Discussion of Findings

I think the overall theme of my findings is that all individuals I spoke to discovered anarchist principles through involvement in the punk scene, and that these two identities (subcultural and countercultural) are still wholly connected to one another.

Tatijana's comments despairing the "anarcho-punk" ghetto that the anarchist scene has become, to quote her anonymous online critic, are perhaps valid. Regardless of their validity, though, they highlight the connection that I was originally searching for in my fieldwork— what is the connection between these two resistant cultures? And why does it exist?

Efforts to find connections to punk in the Slovene context proved unsuccessful. Sunčana's suggestion that the (anarchist/DIY punk) movement is not old, dating from the early nineties at the earliest, hardly predates the founding of Slovene punk in the late seventies. Srdjan's comments further destabilizing the radical/resistant nature of early Slovene punk further suggests distance between the anarchism of today and the punk of yesterday. Sunčana also expressed a distance from the anarchist thought that she had happened upon (page 19) dating from the turn of the twentieth century. Again, her comment points to a movement that constantly reforms and reinvents itself— ultimately this is what anarchism is about. Distance from the past, from theory, from old ideas.

Another theme in the conversations I had was this sort of anarchist epiphany— coming upon anarchist theory and realizing that one is in fact an anarchist, that, as Sunčana said, "these ideas had a name."

My research consistently pointed towards personal stories of anarchist history that were disconnected from any meta-narrative of historical or cultural context. People came on these ideas because they felt like outsiders, because they felt distance from societal

structures and dominant habits or even because it was fashionable in the punk scene (Zhbla's analysis of the Sex Pistols as anarchist roots for the young anarcho-punk). But almost universally, there is a distance between these personal stories and the history. Sunčana discussed the "golden years" of anarchist activism, but only because it was a part of her own story.

The roots of this struggle, then, lie in the individual. In the ultimate libertarian fashion, these ideas (this culture, this movement) comes from within— not from a virgin punk scene in late 1970s Ljubljana, not from Bakunin and the year of revolution across Europe, and not from nationalist/anarchist assassins. The roots of this movement are in these stories of personal gripes with capitalism and consumption culture and those first exciting years spent discovering DIY punk and developing a decent collection of 7 inches.

Regarding nationalism, the explanations to my "punk as alternative" question fit into the cultural context. Punk— save the DIY scene that survives today with bands like Vaseline Children, was historically co-opted. Even the Sex Pistols couldn't escape the fingers of "the system" that wanted to market rebellion to disaffected youth. So, in a society that would rather socialize youth to be loyal citizens of the nation-state and potential paramilitary figures, nationalism absorbs punk. Look only to the right-wing punk scene in Britain, developing out of the white supremacist/isolationist National Front, or similar Nazi punk in the United States, for evidence of punk's ability to be used for forces that it should, *in theory*, stand against.

Conclusion

This report attempted to find the source of a struggle. In working with an anarcho-feminist collective in Zagreb, I learned about the how people come to identify as anarchists, how punk both formulates and destabilizes that identity, and what obstacles face the anarchist movement in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the countries of the former Yugoslavia prepare for EU ascension.

There's a lot more research to be done here. I found out I was the third American to work with this community— one wrote a novel and one shot a film about squatting. The intense differences in our three projects demonstrates how much there is to learn from the anarchists here in Zagreb. They are a lightning rod community. Future projects could include the power of music as radical social change, the shape and appearance of a counterculture in a transitional/traditional country or a further look into Yugo-nostalgia among (radicalized) youth.

Looking back on this experience, I feel hopeful. I feel energized and ready to throw myself into my activism back home. I learned about a lot of problems this month— issues that at times seemed insurmountable. But after the Festival, after making friends and working and learning with them, I feel that community can be built anywhere. And I feel that, if like beads on a necklace these communities are linked together, a new world *will be possible*.

Appendix A
Index of interviews

1. Sunčana (of Zagreb)
March 3, 2007
Tranzicija (Moje, Tvoje, Naše) Festival
Croatian Cultural Center, Rijeka, Croatia
2. Srdjan
March 9, 2007
Unknown Café, Belgrade, Serbia
3. Vaseline Children (Zhbla, Gajo, Kiki, Cane- all of Zagreb)
April 14, 2007
Anarcha-Feminist Festival of Zagreb
Zelena Akcija, Francopanska 1, Zagreb, Croatia
4. Alisa (of Sarajevo)
April 15, 2007
Anarcha-Feminist Festival of Zagreb
Zelena Akcija, Francopanska 1, Zagreb, Croatia
5. Tatijana (of Zagreb)
April 17, 2007
16 Days of Croatian Film Festival
Studentski Centar, Zagreb, Croatia

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