

Anarchist Prison Newspaper in 1919

At the height of the Russian Civil War in August, 1919, anarchists imprisoned by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg began publishing a handwritten newspaper *Prison Nabat* [Tocsin] in the name of the Union of Working Anarchists. Sergei Ovsianikov describes the background of this episode and the content of the publication, which was hardly underground in nature since it included instructions on which cell to deliver submissions to. The first page of the first issue is reproduced below along with an English translation.

Thanks to the Free Archives (https://vk.com/vol_arch) for publishing the first issue of *Prison Nabat*.

Translation by Malcolm Archibald.

PRISON NABAT

by Sergei Ovsianikov

In the summer of 1919, a group of activists of the Nabat Confederation of Anarchist Organizations of Ukraine, including B. V. Yelensky, I. F. Kuchinsky, A. Kristos, I. Meyers, and M. Mrachny, set out for Yekaterinburg to engage in illegal work. In Yekaterinburg they started the Nabat Union of Working Anarchists, and set up a print shop.

On July 15, Yekaterinburg was occupied by units of the Red Army, allowing the Union to become a legal organization. On July 23, with the permission of the local Revkom [Revolutionary Committee], a club and a reading room were opened. But on August 12, 1919, a detachment of the Cheka burst into the club with a search warrant and arrested all the members of the Union. The search didn't turn up anything, but all the arrested individuals were remanded to the Special Branch [of the Cheka]. Then 43 members of the Union were sent to Yekaterinburg Prison No. 1.

Two issues of the handwritten *Prison Nabat* were published: № 1 (August 16, 1919) and № 2 (August 19, 1919). The editor was "Black Raven," and there were four pages of copy.

The first number of *Prison Nabat* was introduced with an "Open Letter to Workers and Honourable Revolutionaries," which told about the arrest of the anarchists, their incarceration in a Yekaterinburg prison, and their decision to publish a handwritten newspaper. Further in the issue was an obituary for Comrade Sukharev (p. 2, author—"Worker An-

archist"). In the section "Chronicle," there was news from Cells No. 2 and 3 (p. 3, authors—"Freelover" and "Finch"). In the section "Telegrams" there was an item about the death of A. Zhelezniakov that mentions the contacts of the prisoners with comrades in freedom, news from abroad, and the declaration "Persecuted in the Urals," telling about the arrests on August 12. The newspaper also published a number of literary pieces, "A Small Feuilleton" and the famous "March of the Anarchists." Under "Announcements" we find that in the near future it was planned to organize a debate and a concert.

The second issue is opened by an article by "Black Raven" entitled "What's Next?" with an analysis of the future actions of the Bolshevik government. Also in this number is a literary page with "Instead of a Feuilleton" (author—"Freelover") and the poem "To the Children of the Proletariat" (p. 2). Political articles: "Thoughts Aloud" (author—"O"), "Why?" (author—"Typesetter"), and "Dare I Say" (M. Mrachny), which angrily denounces the tyranny of the Bolshevik authorities, who have kept the anarchists in prison for a week without charging them with anything. The issue ends with "Prison Chronicles," in which "Finch" reports that 17 people remain in custody, lectures are being delivered in the cells, and courses in the English language are being conducted.

Publication of the newspaper was probably concluded with the release of the anarchists from the Yekaterinburg prison.

СИДИМ ЗАТО ЧТО
БОРЬМСЯ С КОНТР-РЕВОЛЮЦИ

ТЮРЕМНЫЙ НАБАТ



ОРГАН СОЮЗА ТРУДЯЩИХСЯ АНАРХИСТОВ "НАБАТ"
ЕКАТЕРИНБУРГА.

№ 1 СУББОТА 16 АВГУСТА 1919 Г. ЕК. ТЮРЬМА № 1.

Открытое письмо к трудящимся и честным революционерам

Товарищи! Мы первый раз после переворота, сидим в тюрьме. Внешняя и внутренняя обстановка не изменилась; те же тюрьмы (за исключением немногих), те же грязь, те же "ты", грубые окрики..... словом тюрьма.

Но даже как то пришло, но оба, но оба... окружены со всех сторон своими коренными врагами, прислужниками буржуазии. Когда сидели раньше мы знали, что рядом с нами за стеною сидят тов. рабочие, крестьяне и интеллигенты, борющиеся за одно и те же интересы, и посажены царем и его прислужниками, и душителями свободы. Но сидят теперь и быть посаженными теми товарищами с которыми мы все время боролись за одно, против нашего общего врага, и видеть вокруг себя защитников буржуазного строя, предателей и палачи наших товарищей: вот трагедия русской революции, пред которой сердце сжимается от боли, а разум отказывается понять действие отдельных лиц стоящих у власти.

Что представляли анархисты Урала в прошлом и теперь?

На это ответить революционные рабочие и крестьяне Урала.

Надо заметить что из Екатеринбурга среди анархистов выступил активно на борьбу с легкими словаками и белогвардейцами, и

и многие тов. остались на поле брани в лесах Урала. Мы не ослабевали в одной борьбе на фронте, и нами было оставлено несколько крупных кадров подпольной работы, в местностях занимаемых контр-революцией. Часть оставшихся товарищи погибли от рук палачей, а часть живых продолжает свою революционную работу, тогда которые мы должны ценить и продолжать эту жестокую борьбу с мировой буржуазией за Социальную Революцию.

И вот сейчас, оставшихся тов. в живых и приехавшие попомнить ряды погибших сидят в тюрьме.

Что же за причина? Почему понадобилось т.т. коммунистам засадить в тюрьму, без разбора и следствий нас анархистов?

Повторим еще раз что мы докажем на деле кровью, что в настоящее время мы работаем за одно с советами.

Теперь мы сидящие в тюрьме анархисты, обращаемся ко всем петинским революционерам, и к рабочим и крестьянам сказать свое слово и вынести справедливый выговор.

Товарищи революционеры!

Время не ждет!

Пролетарская кровь льется рекой!

Буржуазия торжествует!

Отпор необходим сегодня, - завтра будет поздно!

с тов. приветом
Союз Трудящихся Анархистов
Урала.

Екатеринбургская тюрьма № 1. 16-8-19

PRISON NABAT

Organ of the Union of Working Anarchists NABAT
City of Yekaterinburg

**THE OPPRESSED AGAINST
THE OPPRESSORS ALWAYS!**

*We're sitting in prison for
fighting the counterrevolution.*

No. 1

SATURDAY 16 AUGUST 1919

YEKATERINBURG PRISON #1

Open letter to workers and honourable revolutionaries

Comrades! We're sitting in prison for the first time after the Revolution. The external and internal circumstances haven't changed: the same jailers (with a few exceptions), the same filth, the same "ty" [*literally "thee"—a demeaning form of address in this context — M. A.*], being yelled at . . . in a word—prison. It's even more unpleasant that we're surrounded on all sides by our sworn enemies, the lackeys of the bourgeoisie. When we sat in prison previously, we knew that on the other side of the wall next to us were comrade workers, peasants, and members of the intelligentsia, fighting for the very same interests, and being pissed on by the tsar and his lackeys and suppressors of freedom. But to sit in prison now and be pissed on by those comrades with whom we struggled as one, against our common enemy, and to see around us the defenders of the bourgeois system—predators and butchers of our comrades: this is the tragedy of the Russian Revolution, a heartbreaking experience in which the actions of the individuals in power are impossible to understand.

What did the anarchists of the Urals represent in the past and what do they represent now?

The revolutionary workers and peasants of the Urals know the answer.

Let us note that a detachment of anarchists set out from Ekaterinburg to fight against the Czech legionnaires and the White Guardists, and many comrades perished on the field of battle in the forests of the Urals. We didn't

limit ourselves to a single front but left several groups behind for underground work in places occupied by the counterrevolution. Some of the comrades left behind died at the hands of the butchers, while the remainder continued their revolutionary work, the fruits of which we must cherish while continuing to engage in a fierce struggle with the world bourgeoisie for the Social Revolution.

And now those comrades remaining among the living and arriving to replenish the ranks of the fallen are sitting in prison.

For what reason?

Why is it necessary to the comrade communists to imprison the anarchists without any kind of investigation?

Let us repeat once more that we have proven with our own blood that at the present time we are working for the same goals as the soviets.

Now we anarchists who are sitting in prison appeal to all genuine revolutionaries, to workers and peasants, to speak up and issue a just rebuke.

Comrade revolutionaries!

There's no time to lose!

Proletarian blood is flowing like a river!

The bourgeoisie is winning!

We need to push back today—tomorrow will be too late!

With comradely greetings,

Union of Working Anarchists of the Urals

Yekaterinburg Prison № 1, August 8, 1919.