

The Tarlos of Odessa

by Sergei Ovsianikov

Lev Itskovich Tarlo (Leyvi Itskhok Manusov) (1887, Odessa—Sept. 20, 1906, Odessa). From a well-to-do Jewish family. In 1904 as a member of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, he was arrested, but soon released. In 1905 he joined the Odessa Workers' Group of Anarcho-Communists, then the group "Black Banner." In September, 1905, he shot a policeman and fled abroad. In December, 1905, he returned to Odessa. On January 10, 1906, he helped prepare to blow up a police station, but due to a timing error the bomb exploded prematurely. He or-



Lev Tarlo

ganized a combat group and took part in a series of expropriations. On March 20, 1906, he was arrested and a search turned up pyroxylin, leaflets, and blank passports. Two days later he escaped from the prison exercise yard with the help of Yekaterinoslav comrades. He emigrated abroad, but soon returned to Odessa. On September 5, 1906, he was seriously wounded while resisting arrest. Condemned to death by an Odessan court-martial, he was shot in the Odessa city prison in the yard of the women's compound. In 1927 he was reburied in a common grave in the Second Jewish Cemetery.

Rozalia Moiseyevna Tarlo (underground name: Sheindlya Belyavskaya) (c. 1854 - ?) was the mother of the anarchist L. I. Tarlo. In 1907, after the execution of her son, she set as her goal in life to take revenge—to organize the murder of the commander of the Odessa military district Kaulbars and the former chief warden of the Odessa prison. With this goal she departed for Switzerland, where she joined the "International" Group of Anarcho-Communists in Geneva and the International Anarcho-Communist Combat Group (BIOAK). In December 1907 she was back



Rozalia Tarlo (police photo)

in Odessa as a member of BIOAK and established relations with the local Moldava Group of Anarcho-Communists, which prepared the assassination of General Kaulbars. She was betrayed by K. Yost (aka B. Chizhikov). On March 1, 1908, she was arrested at a safe house on Zhukovsky Street; a search turned up correspondence and a passport in the name of Belyavskaya. Sent to the Yekaterinoslav Prison, she was tried on December 18–22, 1909, by a Provisional Military Court in Yekaterinoslav, and acquitted for lack of evidence. Her subsequent fate is unknown.

Commentary by Malcolm Archibald

A Family against the Empire

The Black Banner organization that Lev Tarlo belonged to was active in a number of cities of the Russian Empire and was considered by the authorities to be the most dangerous of the anarchist formations, responsible for hundreds of acts of terror and expropriation. Tarlo was arrested on September 5, 1906, on Remeslennaya Street in Odessa after a gun battle with police. Remeslennaya Street (literally, Craftsmen's

Street) was located in an older part of the city originally settled by skilled workers from Germany around 1820. Under conditions of martial law, then in effect in Odessa, Tarlo did not receive any semblance of a trial before being condemned to death.

Lev's father made a desperate attempt to save his son's life. He realized that a direct appeal to the military governor, Baron Kaulbars, was

hopeless. Kaulbars was a fanatical monarchist who had recently commanded an army in the Russo-Japanese War (with lamentable results). To make matters worse, the anarchists had tried to kill Kaulbars just the previous month by tossing a bomb into his carriage. Somehow the Baron survived unscathed.¹

Father Tarlo instead enlisted the help of two rabbis, Shimon Gliksberg and



Alexander von Kaulbars

Josif Galperin, who had previously had success in dealing with Kaulbars. The rabbis also agreed that a direct overture to Kaulbars was doomed, so they tried to approach him through a family friend, a certain Madame Fishman. But their efforts came to naught, and the execution went ahead as planned.²

Condemned anarchists were usually hanged by the Empire, but for some reason the regular hangman wasn't available and Lev Tarlo was executed by shooting. He had to be carried to his execution on a stretcher; according to unconfirmed reports, he was already dead (he had been struck by three bullets in his battle with the police). His corpse was buried on the premises, in the courtyard of the women's wing of the prison.³

The Russian anarchist movement that Rozalia Tarlo joined was composed mainly of young people, so she was definitely an anomaly. One of leading personalities of Black Banner was Olga Taratuta, whose sobriquet in the movement was "Babushka" (Granny)—and she was 20 years younger than Rozalia!

The International Anarcho-Communist Combat Group that Rozalia joined included leading activists of the Russian anarchist movement, with such stalwarts as Sergei Borisov,



Boris Chizikov

Kopel' Erdelevskiy, Nikolai Rogdaev, Olga Taratuta, and German Sandomirskiy. Another member of the group, Aleksandr Grossman, tried to assassinate Baron Kaulbars on his own but was slain in a shoot-out with the police on February 28, 1908.⁴

Rozalia's plans for revenge came to naught thanks to the police agent Boris Chizikov (1882 - 1908), whose position of trust in the movement allowed him to cause all sorts of harm. Thanks to his efforts, dozens of anarchist militants were arrested.⁵ This rampage of betrayal came to an end on May 25, 1908, when he was killed in Geneva by Ignat Musil, brother of the famous anarchist Nikolai Musil (Nikolai Rogdaev), according to police reports.⁶

The involvement of Lev Tarlo's sister in his family's insurrectionary activities is not known, only that she was photographed by the police on January 13, 1908.

Rozalia had to sit in prison almost two years waiting for her case to come to trial as the investigation dragged on. Of the 32 members of the Combat Group arrested, only 21 made it to trial. One went insane, one escaped, and nine others died in prison or were "shot while trying to escape" (a euphemism for deliberate slaughter).⁷



Sister of Lev Tarlo (police photo)

After her release from prison in 1909, Rozalia Tarlo disappeared from history—but not for good! She made a triumphant return to the limelight in 1926, when the Odessa city authorities agreed to rename Remeslennaya



Mother Tarlo (police photo)

Street to Tarlo Street in honour of her son. In February, 1927, Lev Tarlo's remains were disinterred from the prison courtyard and transferred to the Second Jewish Cemetery.⁸ On this occasion there was a solemn ceremony addressed by, among others, Lev's old mentor Olga Taratuta. In fact 20 anarchists attended this event, according to the GPU (secret police).⁹

Meanwhile, Baron Kaulbars (1844–1929), the nemesis of the Tarlos, was forced to flee abroad by the 1917 revolution and ensuing civil war. Kaulbars, who had commanded armies and had owned a magnificent estate in what is now Estonia, had to work in an office in Paris to support himself well into his eighties.

When the fascists occupied Odessa in WWII, Tarlo Street reverted to its previous name, and when the Reds returned in 1944, the street was renamed after a war hero, Yakov Osipov, who died defending the city in 1941. The Second Jewish Cemetery was bulldozed in the 1970s.



Tarlo Street

Endnotes

- 1 Viktor A. Savchenko, *Diyal'nist' anarkhists'kykh organizatsiy v Ukrayini u 1903–1929 rr.: istorichniyy aspekt ta politychna praktyka* [The Activity of anarchist organizations in Ukraine in 1903–1929: historical aspect and political practice], (Kyiv, 2017), p. 87.
- 2 Aleksandr Gliksberg, *Yevreyskaya Odessa: Ravvin Sh. Ya. Gliksberg i generaly* [Jewish Odessa: Rabbi Sh. Ya. Gliksberg and the Generals], *Zametki po yevreyskoy istorii* [Notes on Jewish History], (April, 2015).
- 3 Yu. Paramonov, *Osipova street. From Jewish Street to Troitskaya Street. Oendd side.* (2016), http://obodesse.at.ua/publ/osipova_ulica/1-1-0-286.
- 4 Valeriy V. Kriven'kiy, *Anarkhisty* [The Anarchists], *Politicheskoye partii Rossi: istoriya i sovremennost'*. [Political parties of Russia: historical and contemporary], (Moscow, 2000).
- 5 Valeriy V. Kriven'kiy, *Anarkhistskoye dvizheniye v pervoy chetverti xx veka* [The Anarchist movement in the first quarter of the 20th century], (Moscow, 2018), p. 159. According to Kriven'kiy, Chizikov was responsible for as many as 75 arrests of anarchists in February–March, 1908.
- 6 Thanks to Anatoliy Dubovik and Sergei Ovsianikov for this information.
- 7 Viktor A. Savchenko, *Anarkhists'kykh rukh v Odesi (1903–1916 rr)* [The Anarchist movement in Odessa (1903–1916)], (Odessa, 2014), p. 250.
- 8 There were three Jewish cemeteries in Odessa. Only the "Third" one survives today.
- 9 Viktor A. Savchenko, *Rozhrom anarkhists'koho rukhu v radyans'kiy Ukrayini (1927–1929 rr.)* [The Annihilation of the anarchist movement in Soviet Ukraine 1927–1929)] // *Ukrayins'kyi istorichnyy zhurnal* [Ukrainian Historical Journal], 2017, № 1. pp. 84–96.

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