
Manifest surrealizmu socjalistycznego
Orange Revolutions
The State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw
THE WHOLE WORLD IN ONE PLACE

When, in the year 1965 in the Soviet Union, that is 25 years after finishing the book entitled "The writings of François Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance" by the excellent Russian philologists Mikhail Bakhtin, the book was finally published, there was yet another happening taking place on the streets of Amsterdam which was organized by Roel van Duijn, then a philosophy student at the University of Amsterdam, who fascinated by anarchism, the artistic accomplishments of dadaists, the ideology of the New Left led by Herbert Marcuse and Robert Jasper Grootveld, a street artist, a painter. You may ask what connects these two events completely different in regards to the place, other than the fact that they occurred in the same year.

The answer is: "The Carnival".

Researching the sources of Rabelais' Works, a French XVI century writer, Bakhtin notices that the key to understand him is to grasp understanding of the nature of "carnival folk laughter":

"The whole variety… of the culture of folk laughter may be reduced to three basic types:

Ritual and factual (the carnival and activities connected with it),

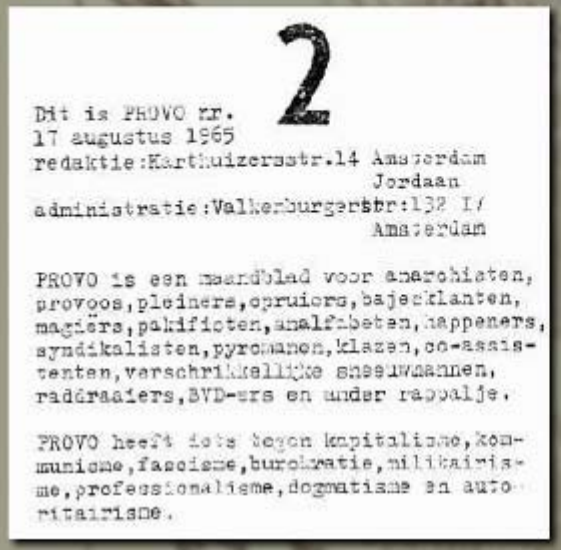
Verbal and written laughter with a tint of parody, irony, sarcasm

Familiar and vulgar laughter (swearings, foolery etc.)"

The Carnival and the laughter in connection to it, as Bakhtin is writing, played a highly important role in the life of the Middle Ages man. Besides carnivals in the sensu stricte sense, procession of the "the feast of the stupid" (festa stultorum), "the feast of the donkey" or the enlightened but free "paschal laughter" (risus paschalus) type took place. The official ceremony: state or religious, was opposed to it, i.e. to the carnival. This kind of structure divided a man's life into two worlds, and as seen in the works of Rabelais, a man could realize himself both in the official (real?) or carnival (phenomenal/unreal?) worlds. Distinguishing the carnival life from the official, only the former made a man free (for the duration of the carnival).

We should, however, remember of the peculiar group of people – court jesters – whom we can call „the carnival carriers", ringleaders. They remained jesters even when the carnival was over. In a sense, they were also „the carriers of freedom".

Let us go back to the events taking place in Amsterdam. Movement Provo, created by Roel van Duijn was understood by some researchers to be a hippie movement, and although more political it still did not identify itself as being a part of any party or group. Roel focuses on the "critique" of the official culture, the political elites and the Netherlands Royal family. Provocative happenings, which he initiates together with other activists of the movement, become his method. The happenings are speedily infused with some features of the carnival, and Roel is sometimes called a court jester. In connection with the White Plans, the Provo followers demanded the closing of the motor traffic due to its causing air pollution. During one of the happenings, Roel equipped the roof of its car with a garden which was to nullify the harmful effect of exhaust fumes.



2

Dit is PROVO nr.
17 augustus 1965
redaktie:Karthuizersstr.14 Amsterdam
Jordaan
administratie:Valkenburgerstr:132 I/
Amsterdam

PROVO is een maandblad voor anarchisten, provoos,pleiners,opruiers,bajesklanten, magiërs,pakificten,analfabeten,happeners, syndikalisten,pyromanen,klazen,co-assistenten,verschrikkelijke sneeuwmannen, raddraaiers,BVD-ers en ander rappalje.

PROVO heeft iets tegen kapitalisme,kommunisme,fascisme,burokratie,militairisme,professionalisme,dogmatisme en autoritairisme.

In 1970 van Duijn finishes the „white" period and commences the „orange" period with the creation of the Party of the Kabouters (Dutch for "Gnomes"). February 1971, Roel brings to life the Orange Free State. They launched a ludic electoral campaign that included many acts of mass absurdism and civil disobedience, non-violent sabotage, and symbolic, Utopian inversion/subversion in the Netherlands. An ideologically heterogeneous, loosely organized anarchist/environmental movement, the Kabouters were unified in their opposition to the Dutch capitalist, social-democratic system and its attendant paradigms, symbols, and rituals. They referred to their counter-institutions and people's meetings as the organs of the Orange Free State, a mythical, mystical, New Left fantasy-nation that had formed, and was meant to flourish, within the rotting body of the corrupt capitalist state. Ironically, though the movement was anti-parliamentarian, their electoral campaigns and their overall history were completely intertwined. In fact, the ebb and flow of Kabouter unity, power, and grassroots energy were reflected by their various showings at the polls. Though the Kabouters' accomplishments included the creation of an impressive array of non-electoral, grassroots, and egalitarian counter-institutions, the movement began with a municipal electoral campaign and ended with a campaign for the national parliament. This was a result of their innovative use of the electoral system as a central forum for their theater.

Orange Alternative (Pomarańczowa Alternatywa) is a name for an underground anarchic movement, which was started in 1981 in Wroclaw, a city located in south-west Poland, by Waldemar Fydrych, known as Major (Commander of the Festung Breslau). Bearing some traits of the Provo movement, and strongly influenced by dadaism and surrealism, it organized happenings, painted absurd graffiti dwarfs on city walls, which became its symbol and was one of most picture element of Polish opposition against communism.

It is said that the name of Orange Alternative arrives from Orange being in the middle of colors representing two major political powers in Poland (until this very day) – the Red for the Communist or left, and the Yellow for the Church and the right; initially it was the name of a student newspaper published by Major Fydrych and Andrzej Dziewit during the first student strike in Wrocław in 1981. In fact, the name had come from Andrzej Dziewit's fascination with the Provo movement in the Netherlands of late 1960's.

Particularly active in the period 1986-1989, while more familiar protests have been gathering pace across Eastern Europe, Orange Alternative was the purest expression of Socialist Surrealism. Unlike those pursuing nationalistic or economic freedom, Orange Alternative made no explicit demands at all; rather, it has adopted an altogether more radical strategy - that of directly challenging on the streets the State' monopoly on Truth.

Many of these events have been truly inspired, combining playfulness with a ruthlessly tongue-in-cheek approach that had consistently wrong-footed the authorities. The prime mover and inspirational leader of Orange Alternative was "Major" - the charismatic Waldemar Fydrych – former graduate in history and the history of art. Major was also the main initiator of the "happenings", the most successful of which had, as time passed, been honed down into succinct anecdotes that received multiple airings in the western press.

During 1988, the Orange wave spilled out throughout Poland with "happenings" also organized in other major Polish cities like Poznan, Gdansk, Krakow and Warsaw; during the Nowa Huta strikes in 1988, a letter was read out to the workers giving support to strikes in the most fulsome terms. The author of the letter was Lenin. On another occasion, Stalinist hymns were sung by a crowd which gathered round the chimpanzee cage in Wroclaw Zoo. Following the release of activist and Polish Socialist Party members Pinior and Borowczyk on June 30th 1988, a demonstration took place featuring a mock trial at which the defendants were Pinior, Borowczyk, Marx and Engels. Later on in 1988, on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, 4000 people marched through Warsaw chanting "We love Lenin". In all its actions, Orange Alternative had enjoyed success and popular support (on occasions attracting the participation of up to 13,000 people) by outwitting and embarrassing authorities, who maintained a system which relied on a single version of the truth for its survival and who were used to a more direct form of protest. Whilst initially Orange Alternative had attracted some criticism that the style of their actions brought the opposition into disrepute, their success in partially demystifying opposition by involving ordinary people in actions in such a way that they did not have to take on the lifestyle of a militant gained it the support of mainstream oppositionists from WiP (Peace and Freedom) and the Polish Socialist Party.

In December of 2004, while Ukraine was drowned in the Orange Revolution social upheaval, Major Fydrych with a group of students joined the Revolution with a happening "Kyiv – Warsaw – our common affair". They went in an Orange Bus from Warsaw to Kyiv, stopping on the road in Polish and Ukrainian cities with happenings, during which participants of all ages were making the Orange Scarf of Support, initiated earlier in Warsaw by Ruslana, the singer – icon of the Orange Revolution.

This Scarf was handed in to Ruslana by Major and Maia, a young student of Polish-Ukrainian origin, in front of thousands of supporters assembled on the Majdan Square, as the symbol of renewed friendship between Poles and Ukrainians. Ruslana gave the Scarf to President Elect Yushchenko, minutes after his victory was announced. On June of 2005, an exposition dedicated to the history and achievements of Orange Alternative was organized by several eurodeputies at the European Parliament in Brussels. In November and December 2005, an exhibit on Orange Alternative was shown in major Ukrainian cities, including an over month long stay at the Center for Contemporary Arts of George Soros at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, the best Ukrainian gallery located on the grounds of the most prestigious academic and intellectual center of Ukraine.

Some Jewish settlers said Tuesday, December 21, 2004 that they will be wearing orange Star of David patches - similar to the yellow ones the Nazis forced Jews to wear before the Holocaust - in an escalation of protests against a planned Gaza withdrawal. The campaign stirred an uproar among some in Israel, which gave refuge to large numbers of Holocaust survivors after World War II. About 250,000 survivors still live in Israel, and mention of the Nazi genocide in a public forum remains an extremely sensitive subject. Settler activists in Gaza said they would distribute the orange stars this weekend, although a handful of Gaza residents displayed the badges on Tuesday. The initiator of the campaign, Gaza resident Roni Bakshi, 40, conceded that the plan was "scandalous" but added that that was the point. "This is exactly what I want to do - to shock. I would not dare to do such a thing if I did not take so seriously this plan to expel Jews from their homes," he said.

"We want to shock the nation," Miriam Freiman, a 67-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives in the Neve Dekalim settlement in Gaza.

Some Jewish settlers said Tuesday, December 21, 2004 that they will be wearing orange Star of David patches - similar to the yellow ones the Nazis forced Jews to wear before the Holocaust - in an escalation of protests against a planned Gaza withdrawal. The campaign stirred an uproar among some in Israel, which gave refuge to large numbers of Holocaust survivors after World War II. About 250,000 survivors still live in Israel, and mention of the Nazi genocide in a public forum remains an extremely sensitive subject. Settler activists in Gaza said they would distribute the orange stars this weekend, although a handful of Gaza residents displayed the badges on Tuesday. The initiator of the campaign, Gaza resident Roni Bakshi, 40, conceded that the plan was "scandalous" but added that that was the point. "This is exactly what I want to do - to shock. I would not dare to do such a thing if I did not take so seriously this plan to expel Jews from their homes," he said.

"We want to shock the nation," Miriam Freiman, a 67-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives in the Neve Dekalim settlement in Gaza.

The Tibetan Orange Story